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LEYTON HALL AND OTHER TALES
BY
MARK LEMON.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LEYTON HALL

AND

OTHER TALES

TAUCHNITZ EDITION.

By the same Author,

WAIT FOR THE END	2 vols.
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IN TWO VOLUMES
VOL. I

LEIPZIG

BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1865

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ALBERTUS

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MONASTICUS

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CHAPTER I

It was two o'clock on November the 3rd, —
The wind from the river swept in cold gusts through
New Palace Yard, at Westminster, and the leaden
clouds above hung low and rain-laden. Notwith-
standing the dreary and uncomfortable state of the
weather, groups of men were standing about, some
seeking shelter from the wind behind the buttresses
of the old Hall; others, with their short cloaks
wrapped closely around their shoulders, crouched
behind the conduit, whose trickling waters were oc-
casionally scattered like rain-drops by the gusty
wind. Grooms were leading about pad horses,
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tattered streamers. Whenever any one came forth
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Goring said a white-haired man in a dark suit of

LEYTON HALL.

CHAPTER I.

It was two o'clock on November the 3rd, —. The wind from the river swept in cold gusts through New Palace Yard, at Westminster, and the leaden clouds above hung low and rain-laden. Notwithstanding the dreary and uncomfortable state of the weather, groups of men were standing about, some seeking shelter from the wind behind the buttresses of the old Hall; others, with their short cloaks wrapped closely around their shoulders, crouched behind the conduit, whose trickling waters were occasionally scattered like rain-drops by the gusty wind. Grooms were leading about pad horses, whose long tails, depressed as they were between their hind-quarters, fluttered in the breeze like tattered streamers. Whenever any one came forth from the Hall, men's faces were turned towards him, and speculation became rife among the gazers.

"The House sits later than I thought for, Master Goring," said a white-haired man in a dark suit of

cloth, to another who appeared of the middle class — a trader, perhaps, from the City of London.

"I thought they would have risen an hour ago," replied the man addressed; "but it's likely that one of the right sort has got the ear of the House, and is telling it our grievances. Heaven knows they are many enow to take time in the telling."

"Past two o'clock," said the first speaker, looking at a ponderous watch which he carried in a side-pocket of his doublet. "I shall tarry no longer, but back to the City. Wilt take a cast in my wherry, Master Goring?"

"I thank thee, no," replied Goring; "I shall bide the end of the sitting, as to-day's doings will be a straw to show which way the wind is to blow for many days to come, I fancy." The two men shook hands and parted.

"Do you know yon gentleman that has just come forth?" asked Goring, of a bystander. "He must be of the Court party, by his gay plumage."

"Yea, friend; 'tis Sir Philip Warwick, a good gentleman enough in the main, but a coxcomb withal. He speaks to Master Edward Leyton, who comes out of my county, Darbyshire."

The two gentlemen referred to by the speakers strolled leisurely across the open space, and appeared to be making for the stairs, where several barges

and wherries were in waiting, despite the coldness of the day.

"You have had a long sitting, Sir Philip," said Master Leyton; "what has caused it?"

"A bear-baiting, or something akin to it," replied Sir Philip; "for some of our new members are more fitted to hound on a mastiff at the Blind Bear than to address a conclave of gentlemen."

"So much I gathered as I walked in the Hall, where I had appointed to meet my scrivener; but I was an hour behind time, and so lost my man. I overheard some sour-faced knaves exulting in what was to happen. Their man seemed to be the member for Cambridge. Who is he?" asked Leyton.

"An ill-conditioned fellow, to judge by his outward man," replied Sir Philip, "though of gentle blood enough. He was speaking when I left the House. You must have heard of the man, Cromwell — Oliver Cromwell?"

"What, that disloyal knave!" cried Leyton. "I never saw the man; but he is always ready, I have heard, to stir up strife, and to claim strange privileges for the people. What manner of man is he?"

"When I entered the House," replied Sir Philip, "I saw a gentleman was speaking, very ordinarily apparelled, for it was a plain cloth suit, which seemed to have been made by an ill country tailor;

his linen was plain, and not very clean, and I was struck by a spot or two of blood upon his little band, which was not much larger than his collar. His hat was without a band, his stature of good size, his sword stuck close to his side, his countenance swollen and reddish, his voice sharp and untuneable, and his eloquence was full of fervour, for the subject-matter would not bear much of reason.”*

“I’ faith! thou hast noted him well, Sir Philip,” said Leyton.

“Yes; and the fellow will be heard of either as a politician, or — a brewer of double ale,” replied Sir Philip, laughing. “He presented a petition from that outspoken rogue, John Lilburne, the sturdy London ’prentice, who hath been whipped and imprisoned for circulating the *Histriomastix*, and other scandals of the scurrilous Prynne. There were other petitions from like fellows, but I escaped, and am now for the three o’clock ordinary at Spring Gardens. Wilt with me?”

“I’ faith! I more incline to a good dinner than a cold voyage in a Thames wherry,” replied Leyton; “but the business I have on hand presses, and I have already missed my scrivener once to-day. One word at parting. I am no great politician, Sir Philip, but I bode evil days from this license of speech now permitted. I would, if I had a place in

* See Sir Philip Warwick’s “Memoirs,” pp. 246, 247.

the House, cry out against such boldness as is now common, or some of us will have to 'boot and saddle' before we are many years older."

Sir Philip shrugged his shoulders. "There must be work on Tower Hill before that, perhaps, Master Leyton. In the mean time I shall make the most of the present, and — it is a quarter to three o'clock. God'den."

Leyton returned his salute and then walked to the stairs, his presence provoking the usual clamour among the watermen who contended for his custom.

The tide was fortunately running down, as the awning of the boat which Leyton had selected afforded but slight protection against the wind. The pair of oars, however, made short work of the distance between Westminster and Paul's Wharf, where Leyton landed, and then made the best of his way to a scrivener's in Breadstreet.

The scrivener was the same person as had spoken to Master Goring in Palace Yard. Leyton apologized for his want of punctuality in keeping his appointment, and was assured that the detention was of small consequence, inasmuch as the scrivener's curiosity to learn the result of the long morning's sitting of the newly-assembled Parliament had made him in no hurry to return to the City. The scrivener asked Leyton if he had heard aught of the matter debated.

"There has been a stormy sitting, as I learned

from Sir Philip Warwick, and much that sounded like treason, to my thinking," replied Leyton; who then repeated, in part, the conversation he had had with his friend.

"I guessed as much," said the old scrivener, sadly. "We are at the beginning of evil days, sir; unless more pains are taken to avoid them than has been done of late."

"I am of your opinion," replied Leyton.

"But our governors lack the wisdom to do so, I fear me," said the scrivener, with a deep sigh. "Woe to those who drive matters to extremity, and set brother against brother, as in the days of the Roses!"

"Again I am with you," replied Leyton; "but better hard knocks and cracked crowns, than this continued fret and perilous uncertainty."

"A civil war is a frightful calamity," said the old man; "and to that we are hastening. The people against their king. Woe to those who make the necessity for such a bloody arbitration!"

"And such, I take it, are those who countenance rude praters like Master Cromwell and his fellows," replied Leyton, warmly.

"Then, were a civil contest to arise, you would side against the people?" asked the scrivener, abruptly.

"I would chop off my right hand rather than draw sword for such malcontents," answered Leyton;

adding, "And so would every true English gentleman. God bless the king!"

The old scrivener continued silent for a few moments, seemingly trimming a pen, but, in reality, struggling to suppress words which he knew it might be unsafe to utter.

"Well, Master Leyton," he said, at length, "we will end this unprofitable talk, and to your business. I trust not to make further transfers of your good acres?"

"Yes," replied Leyton; "but not to satisfy the greed of usurers, albeit to assist in the consummation of what many would think the greatest folly I have yet committed."

"I listen," said the scrivener, after a short pause.

"I am about to marry," continued Leyton, "and some men call that folly. But I — I have the fairest, gentlest, noblest excuse for it that ever man had. The lady has a fair dowry that I desire to be settled upon herself. Here, on this paper, I have set down the amount and all other needful particulars."

The scrivener took the proffered paper, and, having read it carefully, said:

"I give you my congratulations, Master Leyton, on such a promising union. Mistress Maud Netherby comes of a goodly stock — a very goodly stock."

"By the tone of your speech, my old friend," replied Leyton, "you seem to think the luck is all on one side, and that is mine. Is't so?"

"Not altogether as you say," answered the scrivener; "and you must pardon what I am about to advise. My cousin — younger than me by some half-score years — was thy mother, Master Leyton; and so, in some case, thou art of my blood, and blood, it is said, is thicker than water. I had a strong love for thy mother also, and that — pardon me — has, in part, descended to her son. Your generous nature has made you wasteful of your means, and what you said but now, assures me that you will be equally prodigal of life and safety should the unrelenting folly and oppression of our rulers drive the people to rebellion. Pray hear me out. A resolved people must be conquerors in the end, and victors are not always generous or just. Let me advise, then, that for the sake of thy wife and of the children that may be born to ye, Mistress Leyton's dowry be charged upon your own estate."

"Ha! ha!" Leyton laughed. "Thou mayst spare thy breath, old friend. I came for that purpose also, knowing how I have been tempted, and might be again. Here is set down what I desire to be conveyed to her and the Leytons *in futuro* — nearly all that I have left, except our old manor-house, Leyton Hall, and enough of acres to make it seem unlike a prison."

The old scrivener, having read the paper, took Leyton's hand and pressed it kindly, saying:

"You have acted wisely — generously; and should

you keep in the same mind as to the cause you will elect to serve in this coming strife — for come it will, unless God, in his good providence, take away the makers of the people's discontent — thou wilt have preserved to those you are bound to love what otherwise might have been sacrificed."

"I do not share your fears, old friend, even if rebellion stalks the land," replied Leyton. "But let the deeds be drawn. I am impatient to get home again, and would fain take with me your sheepskins. It is rough travelling at this time of year in Derbyshire, and I have no wish to put ice and snow between me and my ladye-love."

"I have an abstract of your property," replied the scrivener, "and by the day after the morrow all shall be ready."

As there were other clients waiting an audience with the scrivener, Master Leyton took his departure, and shortly afterwards entered the Mermaid tavern to satisfy a very excellent hunger which oppressed him.

At the time appointed, Master Leyton was again in the scrivener's house, in Breadstreet, and found the deeds awaiting his approval and signature.

"They will require a witness to their due execution," said the scrivener, "and I will go seek one."

The old man left the room, and returned shortly, accompanied by a gentleman of about two-and-thirty. His hair was long, and curled upon his shoulders.

His fine face, brilliant eyes, and magnificent head, gave assurance of no common man.

"This is my son, Master Leyton," said the scrivener, who chances to be with me, and he will attest your signature."

Leyton instantly rose up and bowed with unaffected reverence, scarcely having power to say: "I am honoured, indeed, by such a witness."

The old scrivener then read aloud the contents of the two deeds, and when he had ended, Leyton affixed his signature in due form.

The witness then attested, and wrote in bold characters John Milton — a name to become a household word wherever men spoke "his land's language." The old House — we had almost written Temple — in Breadstreet has nearly perished, one room only being preserved, and forming part of an adjoining warehouse. It is still remembered as "Milton's Room."

Master Leyton set out for Derbyshire on the following day, and though he and his serving-man, Reuben Studley, were well mounted, they did not reach the Manor House at Leyton until after a week's hard riding.

But then Edward Leyton was to be rewarded for that long and perilous journey before the great Hall put on its Christmas garnishing of holly and ivy green. Maud Netherby was to be mistress at the

Hall; and of the long line of Mistress Leytons which had preceded her, none could have been fairer or more worthy of a husband's love. And so perfect was Leyton's happiness, that for a while he closed his ears to the rumours which reached even into Derbyshire, of the troublous doings which were disturbing men's minds in almost every part of England. There were stirring "newes" at times which curdled men's blood, or roused the anger of the loyal adherents to kingly prerogative.

Edward Leyton, when he heard those rumours of wars, reproached himself for his disloyalty in not joining the standard of his king; but then he had been married not two short years, and his little Alice had just learned to call him father. But he could not rest in Derbyshire. No; he and his wife should go to London for awhile, leaving their child with the careful nurse who had had charge of it from its birth — and the separation was the first great sorrow Maud had ever known.

"A month will soon pass, darling," said Leyton, as he held his wife's tear-covered face between his hands, "and then you shall return; but to London I must go — for — for very weighty reasons. Shall I go alone?"

"No, dearest," replied Maud, throwing her arms around her husband's neck. "You would be so lonely now in that great City. Would you not?"

"Truly yes, love."

"And Alice will be well cared for, and nurse Gibson will send us a post in a fortnight with news of home affairs; so, that will make our separation seem of less account. Kiss me."

Master Leyton was a good husband and did as he was bidden. The next day at sunrise, the horses which were to convey the travellers to London were at the door. Maud was a good horsewoman, and could manage her pretty grey gelding to admiration; but twenty miles a day over rough roads were more than Leyton would permit her to encounter in the side-saddle. Reuben Studley was, therefore, mounted on a strong roadster, that looked like a likely charger, should his master need such at any time; and behind him was a well-stuffed pillion with a footboard, so that Mistress Leyton might sit as easily almost as in her cushioned chair at Leyton Hall.

Her pretty face was stained by tears, and her bright hazel eyes were filled with tears also, and their pretty lids were red from weeping, and their long lashes were wet and glittering with the water which had welled up from her maternal heart. But Leyton wisely took no apparent notice of her sorrow, but kissed her, as he handed her up to the horse-block that she might mount with ease behind the favoured Reuben. Somewhat like Chaucer's "Wife of Bath," upon her pillion

"Easilie she satte
Ywimpled well and on her hed a hatte —"

whilst a long cloth robe lined with white rabbits' skins covered her body and feet, so as to bid defiance to the sharp October wind blowing up the avenue of old elms right into the Hall, making sundry pikes and swords and sylvan weapons jingle on the walls. As the cavalcade (the word though somewhat hackneyed is expressive) passed down the avenue, the rooks, which had long colonized in the old trees, rose up from them and made a noisy chorus, as though bidding Master Leyton farewell, if not a God speed.

Maud with her cavalier and Leyton led the way, whilst behind followed a horse-boy on a stout gallo way, and leading a sumpter-horse laden with the lady's and the master's body-gear. Also with two leather bottles, one filled with Canary wine, and the other with a compound of strong waters, prepared according to a family recipe, and held to be infallible in the cure of catarrhs and the colic. There was also a bag of manchets for the lady's eating, and some slices of brawn, a neat's tongue, and a cold capon, stowed away in two small panniers, to be ready for an emergency. These were needful precautions for a journey of some hundred and thirty odd miles, when Charles the First was king, and long after. The roadside inns were not always provided with other than the coarse fare which satisfied such wayfarers as farmers and hucksters of all sorts, who were generally hungry enough to have

eaten their spur-leathers, provided they could have washed the provender down with plenty of thick glutinous ale from a black jack, whose very reek would have intoxicated a modern fine gentleman.

As the party made progress, Leyton was distressed to hear how unpopular the king had become, and not without reason it seemed, if the grievances of which men complained were real and not imaginary. However much Leyton might be disposed to admit the reasonableness of much of the discontent which reached his ears, he was too loyal by education and prejudice to feel other than a stronger desire to throw in his fortunes with the king. And he would do so, when he had learned in London in what manner service could be best rendered to his master's cause.

Master Leyton had had some sore experience of tavern charges in his youthful days, and though it was necessary to put up at the Bell Inn, in Aldersgate, on his arrival in London, he had determined to find lodgings with some reputable person as soon as possible. His friend Mr. Milton was, therefore, consulted, and some pleasant lodgings in Clerkenwell, from which there was a view over the open fields of Islington and Highgate, were secured for the month which was to be passed in London.

Maud had never been in the great City, and her surprise and admiration were continually excited by what she saw around her. The stores of wealth in

the traders' booths — the innumerable houses stretching on all sides of her — the great river Thames, covered with its gay barges and wherries — the vast St. Paul's, with its ages of histories — the conduits casting their jets of water from morning till night, and some with quaint devices playing on bells, and so marking the flight of time. Then the playhouses and shows were other causes of wonder and delight, as Maud thought what pleasure she should some day give her darling Alice by recitals of all she had seen in marvellous London.

As Leyton and his wife had both connexions living in the City and suburbs, time was never unemployed, and but for the unsettled state of public affairs, this London visit would have been one of those "greenest spots," to be recalled in after years, with all its pleasant memories, when the sky is dark and the storm is raging.

Maud's beauty and Leyton's free, honest, and cheerful bearing, drew around them many of the idlers about the town, and before two weeks had past, the lady had become a toast, and her husband the prince of good fellows.

But such pleasant days were not to last. The contention between the king and the Commons grew fiercer every day. The Attorney-General appeared at the bar of the House of Lords and accused Lord Kimbolton, and five members of the House of Commons, of high treason. The resistance of the accused

led to graver complications, and at last the king, accompanied by three or four hundred armed men, entered Westminster Hall, and demanded the five gentlemen impeached, calling Mr. Pym and Mr. Holles by name, but no answer was made. When the king left the House, the members sat mute for a few seconds, and the cry of "Privilege" burst forth, and the House instantly adjourned.

The alarm in the City was general, and Leyton and those, his friends, who were known to side with the king, stood in some danger, as it was rumoured that the cavaliers were coming to fire the City. The king going to Westminster "in a warlike manner" roused the popular indignation, and committees were appointed to sit, one at Merchant Taylors' Hall, and another at Grocers' Hall. The king, resolute in his determination to maintain his prerogatives, rode into the City without a guard — to show his affection, he said, and to assure them that he should proceed against the men accused of treason in a legal way, for which reason he called upon the citizens to give them no shelter in the City. But, as Clarendon records, "he departed without that applause and cheerfulness which he might have expected from the extraordinary grace he vouchsafed to them." As the king passed along Cheapside, attended only by his master of the horse and a few lacqueys, on his way back to Whitehall, Leyton stood bareheaded opposite Bow Church and made a respectful obeisance,

which was acknowledged by a royal smile. As he continued to gaze after the king, his eyes fell on the old scrivener and his son, who remained covered, and indeed scarcely looked in the direction of the royal party. Leyton was annoyed at what he felt to be a marked show of disloyalty, and he resolved to rebuke it. With this intention he followed the scrivener and his son into their house in Bread-street, where he always met with a kindly welcome.

"Art thou from Guildhall?" asked the scrivener; "as I hear, the king met with a cold reception."

"Not only in the Hall, Master Milton," replied Leyton, "but in the goodly street of Cheap, where such men as thou and thy most worthy son gave him scant homage."

"I only pay homage," said the scrivener, "where I acknowledge worthiness. Would that I could lend thee my eyes and my understanding, and so win thee from a bad cause."

"If there is to be a choice of action," said Leyton, "I hold to my allegiance, which some good men in all else seem to put off like their gloves."

"Is there no allegiance due to the people?" asked the scrivener.

"The people!" repeated Leyton, contemptuously.

"Ay, the people, sir," said the scrivener's son, who had hitherto remained silent. "The king, as all other kings have done, holds his authority from

the people for their good, and not his own. Then may people, as oft as they shall judge it for the best, either choose him or reject him, retain him or depose him, though no tyrant, merely by the right of free born men to be governed as seems to them best." * These opinions he supported with Scriptural quotations, to the confusion of Leyton, who could give no reasons for his devoted adherence to the king, further than that as he came of a loyal race he required no other inducement to peril life and fortune, like a true English gentleman. He could only urge that as the Parliament had invaded the rights of the Crown by the passing of the Militia Bill, he should prefer the rule of one to the tyranny of many.

* Milton's "Tenure of Kings," paragraph 17.

CHAPTER II.

THE circumstances which followed the assembling of the Parliament of 1640 — the Long Parliament, as it came to be called — are so well known, as scarcely to need recapitulation. An alliance had been entered into with the Scotch; Bill after Bill had passed the House of Commons, by which the assumed prerogatives of the king had been greatly curtailed; bishops had been excluded from Parliament and all sway in temporal affairs, and clergymen removed from the commission of the peace. Laud had been sent to the Tower, Strafford executed, to the shame of his ungrateful master, Essex made general for the Parliament, and the king's standard had been set up at Nottingham, as we have already recorded. A few days were to bring on the fatal fight of Edge Hill, when the slain would be counted by thousands.

"Times grow worse and worse, neighbour," said John Ingrain, a mercer in Cheap.

"Nay, neighbour, rather say better," answered Ralph Clicker, the cordwainer; "better, as every day clips our tyrant's claws."

"I know no tyrants," replied John, "but these howling Independents."

"Of whom I am one, neighbour Ingrain," said the cordwainer.

"More shame of thee to confess to such disloyal connexions," answered John Ingrain. "You and your fellows would let no man have a free conscience to think and act for himself, but ——"

"Tut! tut!" said the cordwainer, "you shall not anger me. We have lived good neighbours these twenty year, and may so still."

"Not a day longer, Ralph Clicker," cried John Ingrain, whose ledger showed the good reasons he had for standing by the Whitehall and Somerset House party. "I will not hold with any that cannot cry 'God save the King, and down with Parliament.'"

Having discharged himself of so much loyalty, John Ingrain turned on his heel, and left his old friend the cordwainer, without even the courtesy of "good day, neighbour."

And thus it was wherever men met together. Old friends debated until they parted enemies. Fathers, brothers, sons, set aside their natural relation to each other until the great strife, which was to succeed, became inevitable. So much of the history of the time was needful to our story; but we shall henceforth have to deal with other domestic commotions, in which the contests were long and fierce, and pregnant with many changes of fortune.

The old Mermaid, in Bread-street, had maintained

somewhat of its former repute, when the great wits of Eliza and James made it their Helicon. The larder, opening to the street, was generally supplied with tempting delicacies; and the name of Jacob Magnus, inscribed beneath "a wondrous fishy woman," painted on the signboard, was in high favour with those who loved a tankard of good ale or a flask of good wine.

It wanted an hour to noon, and the large room of the tavern was being prepared for the reception of those guests who needed a morning draught, or a light snack "to close the orifice of the stomach," as Bobadil hath it, until the hour of dinner, which then had grown to be as late as three o'clock.

"Now, Thomas Handy, bestir thyself," said Mistress Magnus, a buxom, bustling dame of some five-and-thirty years of age; "wipe the dust from the settles; polish the silver beakers, that any dulness of the liquor may be overlooked for the brightness of the cup."

"Yea!" replied the young man addressed, in the affected drawl already adopted by the frequenters of the conventicles; and Thomas, though a tapster, had sought to be one of the chosen. "Yea; the vessels of pewter shall be even as the vessels of silver, and the inside of the platter shall be as clean as the out."

"Ay, ay, Thomas," said Mistress Magnus, "I

know thou art a goodly lad; but as thou art slow at work as well as slow of speech, rub on in silence."

It was well for Thomas that he obeyed his mistress, as his master, Jacob Magnus — who was not over-tolerant of the new doctrines — arrived, bearing a well-filled basket on his arm, which he had carried from Stocks' Market, by 'Change.

"Here, you Tom Tapster, help me with my load," bawled Jacob, who could hardly place his burthen upon the table; "the weight of four goodly capons, a dozen of quails, and as many dried neats' tongues, has tired me sorely. A pint stoup of Rhenish, mistress, for I'm oozing like a Virginny planter." Jacob certainly had earned his draught, as his moist brow and reddened face attested.

When Mistress Magnus brought the wine, Jacob eyed the quantity for a few moments, and said —

"Jane Magnus, 'thou art a wicked woman! If thou wouldst not cheat thine own father, thou wouldst thy wedded husband, for this tankard is two pegs, at least, short measure."

"It is too much as a morning draught for a man who drinks the hours round, as you do, Jacob," was the tart reply.

"All in the way of my calling, dame," replied Jacob, raising the tankard to his lips, but pausing before he touched the liquor to utter, in a low voice, "Here's health to the king, and damn the Parliament."

"Hist!" interposed his wife. "If the Parliament gets upsides, as some say it will, such foolish toasting may find thee a halter."

"Lord! if they were to hang me!" cried Jacob, laughing aloud. "I hope they'll give me the choice of a gallows — my own sign iron — fair promise methinks of good entertainment within, eh, dame?" and Jacob's fat sides shook again.

"Ever at thy senseless jests, Jacob," said Mistress Magnus.

"Nay, if thou art to be a hempen widow," replied Jacob, "doth it not show my care of thee?"

"Of me?"

"Ay, for when thou hast leaked as many tears as a woman of thirty ought to do over a husband of forty —" Jacob paused, as though struck with some sudden fancy which he could not suppress —

"Lord! to see *that* face in three rows of crimped crape like a garnish of chitterlings!"

"Go on, husband; I am ever a butt for thy humour." Jacob laughed out his laugh and then continued —

"So when I am hung up like a fatted calf at Christmas-tide, to show how sack possets and choice pickings can feed a man, will not some spare liver be emboldened to seek thy love and thy larder! make thee his wife, and —" again Jacob's playful fancy cut short his period — "Ho! ho! to see thee a

bride again in white dimity gown and sarsenet hood! Everything white but thy face, and that — a Hecla — a volcano surrounded by snow!”

Jacob's laughter was infectious, not with Mistress Magnus, but it moved Thomas the drawer, who became mirthful exceedingly.

Dame Magnus was not a woman at any time to put up with an indignity quietly, not even from Jacob, except when they were alone, and with no witness to the offence — but from her own tapster? No! and Thomas Handy was surprised in the midst of his mirth by the receipt of a stinging clout on the ear, which made his eyes emit as many sparks as the fiery dragon on Lord Mayor's day.

“Laughing at my cost, ungrateful varlet!” and the cuff was repeated. “Now join thy master's coarse jests an' thou durst, fellow. Take the basket and bestow the capons and quails in the larder before the Common Council return from the Guild.”

Jacob restrained his pleasantry at this indication of his wife's temper, as he, too, was not altogether unacquainted with the burning sensation affecting the ears of Thomas, and from a similar cause. Jane had given Jacob her hand on other occasions than when they stood at the altar of Bow Church plight-ing their troth, and endowing each other with their worldly gear.

It was well that silence reigned, as two gentlemen who had recognised each other at the door

of the tavern, now entered for a morning draught of mulled sack, for though it was but the latter end of October, the weather was damp and cold enough to make the warm potation acceptable. Two silver tankards, each containing about half a pint of wine, were soon placed on the table, and a slice or two of salted neat's tongue, which Jacob knew would often act "as a shoeing horn" to draw on more liquor, though one of the guests, Master Richard Cotterell, seldom needed any other provocative to his wine than the continual thirst which afflicted him morning, noon, and night.

"Welcome back to England, Newberry," said Cotterell, taking his small modicum of wine at a draught.

"Thanks, old *camarado*," replied Newberry, drinking more sparingly. "I am glad to have met you. I thought I could not have forgotten the roll of that goodly carcase as it made up Bread-street."

"I have a style — a manner," said Cotterell, "and one that hath won the favourable glance of many a bright eye in this city of Lud."

"Still the same song, Dick," said Newberry, laughing. "Woman! woman!"

"With the old burthen, wine! wine!" replied Cotterell, and then beating his silver cup on the table summoned Tom Handy.

"Another cup — or stay — I have been upon

the river this hour past, and am cold about the midriff, so make the draught a pint, as the wine is somewhat of the weakest. And now tell me — how likest thou Italy?"

"As a drone doth honey, Dick," replied Newberry. "Dark, melting beauties meet you at every turn, and by a sigh — a glance — whisper of moonlight and mischief."

"Tom, the sack!" bawled Cotterell. "Fore heaven! I am half inclined to make a pilgrimage to that land of love, but for two reasons."

"Hey! what! Reason, stay Dick Cotterell from his humour?" asked Newberry, with affected surprise. "Reason! Why, they have named a ward in Bedlam after thee — Cotterell's Ward. Don't talk of reason!"

"One is this, Ralph," replied Dick, holding up a leathern purse but lightly stocked evidently. "It barely serves a poor foot gentleman who is content to pace Paul's Walk for company. You see one of my reasons which tells me that the glowing pleasures of the South are as unattainable as — true measure at a vintner's." Cotterell was helped to his metaphor by the reeking tankard just placed before him, and which proved that Mistress Magnus treated her guests no better than her husband.

Whilst Cotterell was testing the flavour of his new supply, Master Leyton entered the room un-

noticed by the toper, and took his seat at an adjoining table.

"A draught of Canary, lad, and a news letter if thou hast one," said Leyton in answer to Tom Handy's bow.

"The newspaper, the *London Gazette*, is beside thee, sir. It is filled with good tidings. The train bands have declared for Parliament," drawled Tom.

"Cease your disloyal prate!" said Leyton, "and bring my liquor."

The tapster's remark, however, made Leyton refer with eagerness to the *Gazette*, and read with much interest the news contained in its two octavo pages.

Whilst Leyton was thus engaged, Newberry, at Cotterell's solicitation, had had his cup replenished.

"And now, Ralph, for my other reason," said Dick, assuming a sadly sentimental tone. "I am in love."

"I never knew thee out of it," replied Newberry, laughing.

"True," said Dick, "like a timid swimmer I have long disported in shallow waters; but now I have plunged into an ocean that seems to have no soundings."

"Zounds, man!" said Newberry, "thy case is

serious. In such a depth of love nothing can save thee but the lightness of thy wit. Is she so fair?"

"Fair! Let me drain my tankard," replied Dick, suiting the action to the word. "For even I dare hardly attempt to paint her to thee with so cold a fancy as now possesses me. No; Tom Handy, half a measure of sherris!"

The loud tone in which Cotterell now spoke attracted the notice of Leyton towards the speaker.

"Ho! ho! Master Dick Cotterell. I'll keep *perdu* and perchance pick some jest out of his boasting," thought Leyton.

Dick did not wait for the wine, but assuming an attitude somewhat like one he had seen Lacy assume on the stage, he spouted rather than said —

"Poets have nigh exhausted their imageries of beauty! Lilies and roses are as common in their rhapsodies as emptiness in their pockets! The stars — though no two are of a size — have been purloined for the eyes of a thousand Chloes! Nightingales have been caged in throats barred with pearl, and Asia has been traversed for perfumed sighs and ivory fingers."

"Then are such similes unworthy of thy lady love?" asked Newberry, imitating Cotterell's humour. "How describe her?"

"As a woman!" said Dick, elevating his hand and then kissing his fingers to some invisible creation of his fancy. "A mortal creature, glowing with

health. Her carriage free as though she were conscious of her power — her disposition mirthful as though she had never yet been sad; whilst in her eye there lurks a tell-tale glance that says, 'I could love thee, Dick, if thou darest ask me!'"

The wine had certainly warmed Dick's imagination.

"And hast answered her?" asked Newberry, with a smile.

"Ay! by gentle pressures of the hand! posies of double meaning!" replied Dick.

"But hast never spoken plainly to her?" asked Newberry.

"Never!" replied Dick. "Plain speaking was not made for lovers: Cupid converses by hieroglyphics. A wink — put that into words, and my lady pouts; let it have no sound, and my lady smiles. A gentle pressure of my lady's fingers runs through every artery to her heart. Put *that* in words, and cinq-deuce to ace you get your *mittimus* — the sooner if the lady's married!"

Newberry made some reply which did not reach Leyton, as he had risen, feeling that he had no right to listen longer, even for the jest sake.

"There's no trusting to connubial honour, Master Cotterell," he said, advancing to where the boaster was seated, and tapping him on the shoulder; "the common danger makes all husbands common informers, and I have been eavesdropping."

"Leyton!" exclaimed Cotterell, much more confused than any friend would have imagined Dick Cotterell could have been at the detection of an intrigue.

"So! why, thou lookest as ruffled as a Friesland hen," said Leyton, laughing.

Dick instantly recovered his self-possession, and answered, gaily —

"Why, man, it's not every shoulder can bear such a salutation in these unsettled times; and, as I am about to join the army, I have no desire to be clapped up in the Fleet."

Leyton was polite enough to laugh at Dick's jest, and then said —

"Your friend and I are strangers."

"Sir Ralph Newberry — Master Edward Leyton," replied Dick, introducing the strangers, who mutually expressed the pleasure they received at being made known to each other. The conversation then turned to what Leyton had overheard.

"I fear Master Dick flies his hawk at any man's pigeon," said Newberry.

"Not I — not I!" replied Cotterell, with what might have been affected earnestness. "Zounds, man! wouldst thou make Leyton jealous?"

"Because I have a wife whom the world calls fair?" asked Leyton, with a smile. "Make me jealous? No, Master Cotterell. I can know a woman fair, and believe her honest — mirthful, yet

guileless — married, yet constant. Make my creed yours, Dick, and you will really love where now you only covet."

"Hark to him, Ralph!" replied Cotterell. "Dost mark how married men become decoys in the cause of Hymen, like fowlers' birds, to lure others to the net?"

"For what reason?" said Newberry.

"I know not," answered Dick, "unless it be that their bachelor recollections intrude on their matrimonial felicity, and they would lessen their dangers."

"A sorry jest, Master Cotterell," replied Leyton, rather gravely.

"What! hath it made thee sad!" said Dick, the wine speaking. "Thou canst not fear for thine own sweet bird?"

"Not I," answered Leyton, colouring with some feeling of anger; but remembering to whom he was speaking, he added lightly — "It would need a more cunning fowler than Master Cotterell to lure her to his springe. To prove that I neither fear thee, Dick, nor doubt her, thou shalt drink to her health and our old friendship, if thou and Sir Ralph will have your dinner at my lodgings."

The persons addressed readily accepted Leyton's invitation. As it was now full noon, and Leyton having some business, he said, with a scrivener hard

by, the friends separated, Cotterell promising to be Newberry's pilot to the lodgings of the entertainer.

As soon as Leyton had left the tavern, after a brief colloquy with Jacob Magnus, Cotterell drained what remained of his wine, and then, addressing Newberry in a whisper, said —

“Ralph, my friend, I've had a narrow escape from an early grave.”

“What mean you?” asked Newberry, surprised at the change in Dick's manner.

“One question more from you had unplugged my mouth and opened our friend Leyton's eyes,” answered Dick.

“Do I guess what you would say?” asked Newberry. “Is your fair enslaver ——”

“Mistress Leyton! and thou shalt judge if she be not all I have pictured her to thee. Had I confessed as much in Leyton's hearing, I should have had that country-made whinger of his in my body, for I never could fight in a bad cause, or with a wronged husband.”

“Then better throw up the chase, Dick,” said Newberry. “Leyton seems an honest gentleman, and ——”

“He has invited me to dinner, and to try conclusions with the lady,” replied Cotterell; “so, Tapster Tom, bring our reckoning. What say you for a walk as far as Westminster? There is a main

of cocks fought to-day, and we may have an hour's sport."

Sir Ralph agreed to this proposal of disposing of their time until dinner; and, having paid their reckoning, they walked leisurely westward.

Master Leyton was known to mine host of the Mermaid, not only as a customer, but as the master of his niece Tabitha, who had been engaged as waiting-woman to Mistress Leyton, on her arrival in London, at the recommendation of some one acquainted with Magnus. It was, therefore, with no surprise that Tabitha received a visit from her Uncle Jacob, although it was barely one o'clock, an hour when the Mermaid was beset by dinner-seekers among the citizens; but Jacob cared little about his outgoings and incomings, knowing he had a careful helpmate, and there was little liquor to be had by invitation from the thrifty traders, who only dined at the Mermaid from some domestic necessity.

Tabitha, after saluting the rubicund cheek of her uncle, did make inquiry what had brought him from his home at mid-day?

"Why, thy master, having a keen nose for good venison, hath ordered a pasty that hath done good service in my larder this se'nnight," replied Jacob, with a chuckle. "It wanted a new master."

"La, uncle!" said Tabitha, "hast thou no conscience?"

"As much as is good for a taverner, niece, who

desires to pay scot and lot and live," replied Jacob. "The pasty is worthy the high destiny awaiting it. It will go down none but gentle gullets, as Master Cotterell and a Sir Ralph — Sir Ralph — I forget the name — will be here anon to dine with your master. Should they come before Master Leyton returns, they are to be invited in."

"Ne'er fear, uncle," said Tabitha, with a sigh; "Master Cotterell will need but little pressing, my mistress being within!"

Jacob gave a short, knowing whistle.

"Sets the wind in that quarter?"

"Oh, if I had not a good conscience!" said Tabitha, who, having a sneaking kindness for Tom Handy, had acquired something of the cant of the conventicle.

"What's the wench mean?" asked Jacob, with the curiosity peculiar to his class.

"Uncle!" answered Tabitha, solemnly, "what mean three new dresses within the month? A tailor has but now brought home a gown that must trail like the court ladies' — half a yard at least. Then mistress has learnt to part her hair on her forehead into small ringlets and round it into a knot at the top — Queen's fashion, it is called. She hath a laced handkerchief and a falling band that sets off her pretty country face. Why all this?"

"Because Mistress Leyton is a woman," an-

swered Jacob, "and knows how to please herself and her husband."

"Would it please her husband, think ye, uncle," said Tabitha, rather wickedly, "to see how certain gallants among his acquaintance make eyes at my mistress, or to know that money — silver, ay, even gold — has been forced into my hands to deliver posies and scented gloves to my mistress?"

"And you did not return the money, nor your mistress the gloves, I'll be sworn," said Jacob, laughing.

"Then you would be forsworn, uncle," replied Tabitha. "My mistress would have none of them — yes, the posies, now and then; though I must own I never saw her overstep the bounds of modesty."

"And the money, Tabitha?" asked Jacob.

"I was always too frightened when it was given me than to do other —"

"Than put it in thy pocket," said Jacob; "an' thou'dst been a fool not to have done so."

"Yes; perhaps so, uncle," replied Tabitha; "but my conscience sometimes reproves me for it. It seems so like —"

"The profits of a waiting-woman's place, that is all, niece," said Jacob.

"And how is my aunt?" asked Tabitha, satisfied by her uncle's opinion as to the propriety of her conduct, and desirous to change the conversation to a subject of some interest to her.

"Thy aunt! Marry, she has made up her mind to be a widow; and so is always ailing. Like a pair of bellows, she is ever sighing to blow me into a flame, which I can only quench by drinking. The sexton will charge her double for me, that's one comfort," said Jacob, laughing.

"Don't talk in that profane manner, uncle," replied Tabitha. "Death is a frightful thing!"

"Yes, to old maids and bachelors," replied Jacob; "but la! your married man fears it not, having encountered the worst that can befall him — a wife!"

"And how — and how is Thomas Handy?" asked Tabitha, with affected carelessness.

"Nigh ready for the barber," replied Magnus; "for his head grows thick enough for a block for periwigs."

"Fie, uncle!" said Tabitha, colouring slightly. "But Thomas hath a good conscience, and that will give him strength."

"Heaven send it may!" replied Jacob; "but now he seems to trust to ox-beef and double ale, to my cost. But take away the pasty, and give me my basket, that I may be making my way home again in time for our ordinary."

Tabitha had been so little pleased by Jacob's remarks about Thomas Handy, that she did not seek to detain her uncle, and received his parting salute with something very like a pout upon her lips.

CHAPTER III.

LEYTON was not very well pleased with himself for the part he had taken in the morning's conversation at the tavern; and he felt that he had done Maud wrong in allowing her in any way to have been made the subject of such loose jesting. He was almost angry with himself, having invited Cotterell to meet Maud at dinner, after the avowal he had made of his libertine character.

The custom of the time allowed great latitude of conduct; but the introduction of a professed seducer seemed an insult to the virtuous wife. There were other thoughts which obtruded themselves, and made Leyton more uncomfortable than he had been throughout his whole married life. He could not dismiss Cotterell's light boasting as altogether without foundation; and Leyton thought that possibly some fair, frail woman, had stooped to regard the impudent *roué*, while she was trusted and loved by some doating husband like himself. He strove to repel such thoughts; and felt that to entertain them for a moment longer than it was possible to dismiss them, was a wrong to Maud — his loving, devoted Maud.

Neither had the business which had taken him to his scrivener, Master Milton, been of the pleasantest character, connected as it was with a prospective scene of sorrow and difficulty. Leyton's loyalty had been so roused since he had been in London, where hourly news of king and Parliament were to be had, that he had resolved no longer to postpone the offer of his services to his Sovereign, although it involved the disturbance of his domestic peace, and his separation from his young and lovely wife and his darling Alice.

Leyton was fully sensible of the sacrifice he was making, and of the chances of danger which attended it; and he had, therefore, made a full disposition of his remaining property to his wife and daughter. The painful announcement of his intention to join the king's forces had yet to be made; and he knew it would prove to be a great sorrow, as whenever he had alluded remotely to the possibility of such a demand being made upon him, and upon all true English gentlemen, Maud had shown by her tears how terrible would be the contingency.

He paused for a few moments at the door of his lodging, hoping to regain his usual cheerfulness before meeting Maud: and, having succeeded in part, he knocked at the door, which was opened by Reuben.

"Have my friends arrived?" Leyton asked, as

he gave Reuben his hat, and gloves, and walking-cane.

"We have many callers, sir," replied Reuben, quietly; "Sir William Royston, Captain Carr, and another gentleman that you met at the Bowling-alley."

At another time, Leyton would have received this information as no unusual summary of their morning visitors, but now a cloud came upon his open brow, and a sigh escaped from his broad bosom. Reuben noted both; and his thick, black brows closed nearly, as though a sudden pain or a sudden pleasure that he would fain conceal had affected him.

"Maud is wrong," thought Leyton, "to hold these morning levees of light-brained idlers when I am absent." But checking the ungenerous inference that might have followed, he said aloud, "Yet why should I deny her the homage she commands and merits? Where is your mistress, Reuben?"

The question was answered instantly by Maud running playfully from an inner room, and throwing her arms around her husband's neck. Having kissed him, she said, "You have returned sooner than I had looked for, Edward."

"Not sooner than to be welcome, eh, sweetheart?" asked Leyton.

"You would not ask me such a question if thou couldst doubt my answer," replied Maud, again kissing him. "Where hast thou been?"

"To Master Milton, the scrivener, to make my will," answered Leyton, smiling.

"What put such a thought into thy head as making of thy will?" asked Maud, opening her large hazel eyes to the full.

"No more than this: that, should I die, thou shouldst not go undowered to thy second husband."

"My second husband!" The large hazel eyes closed instantly.

"Yea; as thou art already provided with a choice of suitors, I thought I had better provide for my departure," said Leyton. The words came unbidden, and were spoken.

"There is now unkindness in your jesting," replied Maud, tears stealing down her cheeks. "I know none but are thy friends — none that breathe a word beyond the limits of innocent gallantry — none that would dare aver that he looked on me but as thy wife, and the guardian of thy honour."

"I do believe so, dearest," said Leyton, pressing Maud to his bosom. "Forgive me my idle words."

"Yes, if thou wilt go presently to Master Milton, and bid him send thy will to make tailors' measures; it may then benefit some of the gallants thou hast given me."

"I will do anything to please thee, sweetheart," replied Leyton, saluting the pretty lips that pouted to be kissed. "To prove to thee that when away I am always mindful of thy pleasure, I have invited

your especial favourite, Master Cotterell, to dine with us to-day."

"So I have learned," said Maud, "and some other friend. Tabitha and I have been making preparations to receive them."

A smart knocking at the door announced the arrival of their visitors — at least, Maud said so.

"That is merry Master Cotterell's knock, I'm certain. I know it, because it seems an echo of his laugh."

Leyton smiled at this conceit, and remembered it hereafter.

Reuben having introduced the guests, Cotterell advanced to Mistress Leyton, and presented her with a bouquet of flowers — then to be gathered in many a fair garden of old London City.

"Madam," said Dick, bowing formally, "like a devout gallant, I make my matin offering to my loveliest saint."

As much extravagance of compliment was permitted in society, Maud accepted the flowers, and replied, archly —

"A proper type of so general a worshipper, as here is the queenly rose and the humble violet — love's myrtle and a sprig of rosemary."

"I see my error," said Dick, softly; "to-morrow I will bring only myrtle."

Maud felt a blush rise to her cheek — she knew not wherefore — as she answered —

"My husband seems to have forgotten us. Edward, our new guest ——" But Maud started with surprise, and exclaimed — "Sir Ralph Newberry!"

"Maud Netherby!"

"The same, Sir Ralph," said Leyton, also surprised; "though now Mistress Leyton. You are known to each other?"

"Yes, Edward," replied Maud. "When quite a child Sir Ralph was my lover, and as faithful a knight as ever chased butterflies or gathered hazelnuts for his lady-love. We have met rarely since then; the last time, if I remember aright, was six years ago."

"Quite six years," replied Sir Ralph. "I was then on the point of obeying my father's commands to travel."

"A wonder, Cotterell!" said Leyton, "a woman keeps a secret! For nearly two years have we been man and wife, and this love-passage of my fair dame hath never been mentioned."

"Wouldst thou have me show thee a catalogue of my toys?" asked Maud, with a little laugh.

"Yea, if they were all such dangerous playthings as the gallant Sir Ralph Newberry," answered Leyton, smiling also. "Really, Sir Ralph, I shall grow jealous of you. He was a wise limner that painted Cupid blind."

"You hear, Sir Ralph, what my husband thinks," said Maud, laughing.

"I hear but what he *says*," replied Sir Ralph.

"Still as I think," said Leyton. "Look at a woman by Hymen's flambeau, and you detect her mortality."

"Then Jove keep me a bachelor, as I prefer the society of angels!" exclaimed Cotterell, bowing to Mistress Leyton.

"Thank you, Master Cotterell," replied Maud, with a graceful bend of her pretty head. "Here is Tabitha to bid us to dinner, and to put an end to my husband's ungallant speeches."

The dinner, though hastily arranged and prepared, was an evidence of good housewifery, and the pasty from the Mermaid remained untasted on the side-board. There was some sensible conversation between Sir Ralph and Leyton, and plenty of fulsome compliment from Master Dick, who became more figurative and ridiculous as the wine circulated. Maud at last rose to leave the table, but her departure was delayed by the entrance of Reuben, who brought a letter tied with black silk and sealed with black wax, for Master Richard Cotterell. The letter had followed him to the Mermaid, and had been sent on by Jacob Magnus.

"Ill tidings, I fear?" said Leyton.

"I trust there is mourning enough on the outside," said Dick, "to give me no cause for more within. If, as I opine —" he had opened the letter, and, having read a few sentences, hurled it

aloft and danced about like a wild Indian. When he had expended so much of his superfluous gratification as could be disposed of by his legs, he threw himself into a chair and gasped out —

“Leyton, Newberry — dear lady — gratulate me! — envy me! — pardon me! I am a made man! — a man of gold — of lands and houses, rivers and mountains! My old Welsh uncle has died without a will, and I am heir to the scrapings of sixty years! Read, Leyton, what some blessed goosequill has written; and, Ralph, a brimming glass of that old Burgundy, if you love me!”

Leyton read the letter, and found that it contained the good news for Dick which he had described in such a remarkable manner. Although there seemed to be nothing in this accession of fortune to Cotterell which could have more interest for the Leytons than the natural gratification of two generous natures at the success of a friend, yet it was so used in the time to come as to be productive of the most serious consequences to both.

The news of the Battle of Edgeul, or Edge Hill, reached London on the 24th of October, and both the friends and the enemies of the king claimed the victory. The excitement became intense in the City, and almost led to open warfare within the walls, between the Cavaliers and Roundheads, as the two parties were now coming to be designated.

Leyton hesitated no longer as to the course he should pursue. He therefore made secret preparations for Maud's return to Derbyshire, entrusting her safe conduct to the faithful Reuben.

Leyton mistrusted his own firmness to resist the remonstrances of Maud against his determination to join the king's army. He knew how great would be her sorrow, how passionate her grief, and loving her as he did, he could not trust himself to encounter such a painful struggle. He therefore wrote her a long and earnest letter, wherein he set forth his strong sense of duty to his king, his detestation of the insolence of the overbearing Puritans, who threatened to ride roughshod over all the gentle blood in the land, and to institute the worst tyranny that could afflict his country. He thought and spoke as did many a true gentleman of that unhappy period, and in whom the old chivalry had not been extinguished, and who drew his sword in the king's cause because the quarrel was the king's.

Leyton bade Maud be brave as she was loving, and by her avowed resignation to the sacrifice he was making, induce other true men to strike for the true king. That she would find a solace in the training and companionship of their darling Alice, so that when peace should come — as it would in a few short weeks perhaps — their lives would be made happier for this transient sorrow. He told her, also, that if Leyton Hall should be too lonely for

her comfort, she had his full consent to take residence with her sister Constance, or to make such other disposition of herself as pleased her. And then, with many honied phrases and earnest prayers for their quick reunion, he bade her farewell.

It needed many readings of this cruel epistle before Maud could fully understand the misery which had come to her. Many readings — as her streaming eyes blotted out the words that conveyed the terrible intelligence that *he* had gone to encounter danger of suffering or of death! Oh, what an appalling thought! She must be in some oppressive dream — some hideous nightmare that terrified her soul, and from which she could not free herself, strive how she might. Left her! — gone without one parting kiss! — gone without seeing their darling, and to such perils as she had never thought within the scope of their peaceful lives!

For a time poor Maud appeared to be stunned by her grief, and she remained in a kind of stupor, until tears — blessed tears! rushed freely from her eyes and gave her relief. With more calmness, she re-read all that Leyton had written, and after a while she seemed to comprehend the reasoning of her husband. Tabitha, a kindly girl at heart, though endowed with the cupidity of a waiting-woman, showed her sympathy by her silence, as she knelt by her mistress, and pressed the unresisting hand, cold — almost as cold as death could have made it.

"Dear, noble, gallant husband!" Maud said, at length; "I thought I could not love thee more from any act of thine! But I do — dear Edward, I feel I do — for this chivalric sacrifice of all most dear to you. No word of mine shall be said to win you from the path of honourable duty. And yet —" she added after a pause, "and yet, if ill should befall thee — wounds, sickness — and I not by your side to watch and comfort. Oh, merciful Father! give me courage and strength to endure." She fell upon her knees, and so remained praying to the only certain Comforter.

The next day, and the next, brought occasional paroxysms of grief; but they were mitigated as time went on. In one matter she showed disobedience to her husband's commands. She refused to leave London for the present. Knowing that the king's forces, which Leyton had joined, were in the neighbourhood of Brentford, Maud encouraged the hope that Leyton might not find service suitable to his position, or that some happy circumstance might put an end to the threatened strife, and then she should be near — ready to welcome back her soldier whatever had been his fortune.

She therefore wrote a loving missive to Leyton, resolving to despatch it by Reuben so soon as she could learn the whereabouts of her husband. The Battle of Brentford was fought with doubtful success (so history records), but the boastful Londoners en-

gaged in the fray claimed the victory as against the king. Maud wondered — affrighted at her own conjectures — if Leyton had borne a part in it! And if so, with what result? Now she saw him as the leader of a successful charge — then he laid stricken down, hacked and bloody among the slain. These conflicting fancies became almost unendurable — perhaps would have proved so, had not a messenger brought a ragged piece of paper, on which was rudely scrawled: "Victory! dear Maud! All well. A thousand kisses! — E. L. P. Rupert's quarters."

Her first impulse was to journey to Brentford; but Reuben besought her friends to dissuade her from so rash an undertaking, and she yielded to remonstrance only on condition that Reuben should convey her letter to his master.

The faithful servant was delighted at such a charge, and having, through the interest of Master Cotterell (who had returned to London) obtained a safe conduct pass from Denzil Holles, to whom Dick was known, was soon on his way to Brentford.

Rather more than a week had elapsed since Leyton had left for the army, and during that time Mistress Leyton's friends had not neglected her. Master Cotterell had been regular in his visits, so anxious was he to learn tidings of Leyton, whose rashness he condemned, until Maud requested that her husband's conduct should remain unquestioned.

"To hear is to obey, dear lady," said Cotterell,

with affected humility; "but why a man should fly the heaven of such a home for the *inferno* of a camp, for any king or potentate in Christendom, exceeds my poor comprehension."

Maud merely bowed, as though wishing to avoid the subject.

— It has been in the experience of many, that when beset by some great apprehension or heavy sorrow, the afflicted seem to accept any grotesque or even childish circumstance with an appearance of satisfaction strangely opposed to all that might have been thought a solace in affliction.

It was thus with Maud, who listened to Cotterell's fulsome compliments and idle gossip with a patience which gratified, whilst it rather surprised that unprincipled gentleman.

Cotterell's unexpected acquisition of wealth came at a time when he had gathered much experience from that stern teacher, necessity; and though he was sufficiently profuse in his expenditure, he indulged in no wasteful extravagance, to the disappointment of many of his old boon companions. Indeed, he appeared to control his propensity for deep potations and midnight orgies to which he had been heretofore addicted, as though he were resolved to live more "cleanly, like a gentleman," now that he had the means to purchase other appliances to enjoyment. He affected not to comprehend the causes of dissension between king and Parliament, and reso-

lutely eschewed all discussion of politics, at a time when the talk of men — and women also — was rarely of anything else. This change of conduct could hardly be called reformation, as Richard Cotterell had devoted himself to the accomplishment of an object which was even more opposed to honour and morality.

It was late in the afternoon of the second day succeeding the battle of Brentford, that Reuben, after many difficulties, reached the quarters of Prince Rupert. Nor was it then easy to find his master, who, having joined very recently, held no command, but served only as a volunteer. Leyton had, however, distinguished himself somewhat during the action, and from that circumstance Reuben was at last enabled to find out where he was quartered. Never was messenger or missive more welcome, and a couple of gold pieces rewarded his perseverance and fidelity.

It is needless to say how Maud's letter was read and re-read by him who loved her so well, or how proud he felt of the true wife who valued her husband's honour more than her own peace.

And then Leyton questioned Reuben, who told him — "Mistress was sorely afflicted, sir, when first she learned your departure, and Tabitha had fears that she would have gone distraught at times."

"Poor child!" said Leyton; "but when you left her she was more at ease, Reuben?"

"Oh yes, sir, and had been for many days past — after she had written that letter. She was prevailed on to see company, and many of her friends came around her, Master Cotterell almost — ay, quite daily, sir."

A slight flush rose to Leyton's cheek when he heard this.

"My mistress — as, perhaps, she has told you, sir — doth refuse to return to the country —"

"Until she has heard from me," said Leyton.

"Likely, sir," replied Reuben. "I take it, it is still your wish that she go there?"

"It is so; and I will write her to that effect," said Leyton, "though there are scant means of doing so. I must ask among my comrades for pen and paper."

But Leyton was prevented making the inquiry, as a trumpet sounded a summons to saddle.

"To horse, men!" said a cornet, entering the guard-room where the above colloquy was taking place; "the king departs for Oatlands, and we are his escort."

Leyton was too young a soldier, too fond a husband, to receive this order without a mental murmur; but he knew he must obey, and therefore he spoke a few earnest words of message to his wife, and amongst others an earnest request that she would forthwith return to Leyton Hall while the state of the roads made such a journey possible.

How coldly were Leyton's loving words delivered, and how much his request that Maud should return home sounded like a command, as Reuben repeated it!

Maud reluctantly prepared to obey — the more reluctantly, as she had received news from home assuring her that her darling Alice was thriving as heart could desire, and — he — her husband — was in the midst of dangers, and tidings of him would rarely reach her in the lonely country home.

All was ready for her journey, but there was to be a long delay, as the winter set in early, and a heavy fall of snow made travelling, as it was then, impossible.

The attention which had been called to Leyton's gallantry at Brentford fight had reached the ears of Rupert, and he was appointed to a cornetcy in a troop especially devoted to the charge of the king's person. His majesty had gone into winter-quarters at Oxford, and thither Leyton had accompanied him. For many weary weeks he lay there without the possibility of hearing from his beloved Maud, or of communicating with her, so unsettled was the country — so difficult the means of conveyance. The condition of poor Maud was still more distressing. Separated from her husband, in ignorance of his state, constantly beset with loving fears for his safety, no active duties to occupy her thoughts, what could she do but weep and pray for him? The ac-

cident of the weather kept her also from her child, and her wifely solicitude was only exchanged for her maternal anxieties; and at times she accused herself of selfishness in having kept away from Alice to be nearer to her husband. The cruel snow fell and melted; fell again, and remained long upon the ground, and Reuben pronounced the roads to be impassable. Poor Maud! She who had been so happy until the beginning of that civil strife which was to make fair England a land of lamentation.

It is not to be wondered at that one so placed should be glad to welcome the visits of friends and acquaintance, or that she should listen still patiently to the light conversation of merry Master Cotterell. She had no interest in what he said; but the sound of his voice, the effort of listening to his words, changed the painful current of her thoughts, and she appeared grateful for the relief.

Cotterell's vanity was flattered by her attention, and his sinfulness was encouraged by it — deceived by it.

After a morning visit, and when he had used bolder words and phrases than he had ever ventured upon, Maud, when left alone, began to recal some of the expressions he had used, and a sudden alarm seized upon her. Surely he, her husband's friend, could have had no hidden meaning in what he had said? He could not have intended to convey to her sentiments which he would not have dared to dis-

close in the presence of her husband? The more she thought over the interviews of the last few days, the more she became frightened at the construction which could be put upon them; and so strong became her terror at her own conclusions, that she struck, almost unconsciously, the little silver bell which summoned Tabitha, with the intention of forbidding Cotterell's admission to her presence for the future.

Tabitha did not answer on the instant, and when she came into the room her manner was confused, as though something had occurred to startle the good conscience of which she was in the habit of boasting. She merely said, "A letter for you, madam," and having delivered it, left the room.

Maud tore away the silk which bound the paper, expecting — as she always did when letters came to her — that the missive contained news of her child or husband. With beating heart and tearful eyes she began the perusal of what was written; but as she proceeded, a deathly paleness came over her face, until, crushing the paper in her hands, and then casting it from her, she sank back in her chair, and burst into an agony of tears.

What had so moved her?

The letter was from Cotterell, although the cowardly libertine had withheld his signature. Maud knew that no other friend would have dared to

have addressed her as that wicked letter spoke to her. It read thus:—

“FAIREST OF CREATED BEINGS! —

“Ovid tells how Icarus, flying too near the sun, fell into the sea and perished. Though fearing to fall like him — for thou art to me the sun of my existence — the intensity of my love makes me brave the danger. Fear bids me destroy this missive; but the memories of stolen glances and gentle words bid me withhold my hand —”

Maud had read no more, but cast the letter away.

When the first expression of her indignant grief had subsided, she rose up and walked about the room almost bewildered. What should she do? Fly at all hazard to her husband. She only knew by rumour where it was likely he might be found! No, that course was hopeless. There were pens and paper on her table. She would write to the villain who had so insulted her — yes, write calmly to him if she could, and forbid him her house. She could hardly master her thoughts sufficiently to be coherent in what she wrote.

“I have long esteemed you as a dear friend; but what has passed during the last few days had somewhat prepared me for thy letter ——”

She threw down the pen! To write to such a man in answer to such a letter seemed treachery to her absent husband. *He* would have answered only with his sword. As she thought thus, a feeling of sickness and a faintness came upon her, and she again struck the bell for Tabitha, who arrived just in time to see her mistress's head fall upon her shoulder, and the mockery of death come into her face.

Tabitha instantly called for Reuben, and by his assistance Maud was conveyed to her chamber, after being partially restored by such appliances as were then in use.

When Reuben returned to the room where his mistress had been sitting, his quick grey eye glanced about as though seeking the cause of Maud's sudden illness. The crumpled paper still lay upon the ground. He picked it up and read it slowly, very slowly. There was a smile upon his lips when he had finished. On the table were the few lines that Maud had written. Reuben read those also, and then he folded the sheet of paper and placed it with Cottrell's letter in a pocket inside the breast of his doublet. He then stood with folded hands and upturned eyes and compressed lips, as though he were looking perhaps back into the past, perhaps forward into the future.

After a time he walked stealthily to the door of

Maud's chamber and listened for a few moments, but possibly hearing nothing, he clasped his hands above his head, and muttering either a prayer or a malediction, walked silently out of the room.

The next morning Maud gave orders to prepare for the journey home, nothing would stay her longer — not even the prospect of broken roads, streams flooded by the melting snow; the bitter frosty air, or the certainty of cold and cheerless lodgings at the miserable roadside inns! She felt she had been touched by evil, and needed the pure embraces of her child to make her clean again.

CHAPTER IV.

THE civil war was now at its height. It would be only repeating the history of the times to particularize the events in which Leyton was compelled to take a part, as Prince Rupert had conceived an extraordinary liking for him, and continually employed him in conveying verbal communications between himself and the king, as the roads were so possessed by scouts, that it was not prudent on all occasions to commit to writing the projects of the Royalist commanders. From the same cause, Leyton had not been able to write or to receive letters before he was appointed on secret service to the queen, and to the honour of forming part of her escort when she fled to France.

The letter which Leyton had written, informing Maud of this new service, was unluckily intercepted, and as the matter it contained was considered to be of importance to the State, it was detained, and Maud therefore was left in ignorance of her husband's departure from England.

During this time, Leyton Hall — one of the moated manor houses, built early in Elizabeth's time, on the site of a dismantled stronghold — had been

frequently occupied by the troops of king and Parliament, until Mistress Leyton determined to take up her residence in a small house on the confines of the park. She was accompanied thither by her waiting-maid and nurse, and only two other domestic servants, whilst Reuben and a part of the household remained at the Hall. Maud had changed greatly since the cruel separation from her husband, and at times she fell into deep despondency, from which it required all Tabitha's cleverness to rouse her. Little Alice was generally the medium employed, but it sometimes happened that the very endearments of the child only served to increase the mother's depression. The consequence of these attacks was a nervous excitability, which made Maud painfully sensitive, and apprehensive of evil to those whom she loved, and an impulsiveness was induced which not unfrequently gave her attendants some discomfort and much anxiety. No tidings of Leyton had reached Maud for some weeks, and yet news of recurrent conflicts came by an occasional news-letter, or was narrated by one of the wandering pedlars who sought for custom at the door.

It was early June, when towards the close of the afternoon a servant in the livery of Mistress Leyton's only sister, Constance Gray, rode to the house, and delivered a letter marked, "Haste — post haste." The horse on which the man rode was covered with foam, and though he had travelled only twenty miles,

as the crow flies, he had been nearly three hours upon the road.

The letter just received contained painful news for Maud. Her sister was thought to be at the point of death, caused by the sudden intelligence that her husband, Cecil Gray, had been mortally wounded in a skirmish, and was then being borne secretly to his house. Maud was implored to come at once to Constance, but to conceal if possible from every one the supposed cause of her sister's illness. To read was to be obeyed, and horses were forthwith ordered from the Hall; the messenger's tired beast being left to recover from its fatigue, whilst the servant — who requested to be permitted to return as Maud's guide — was mounted upon the horse usually ridden by Reuben. Having embraced her darling Alice, Maud with a heavy heart started, late as it was in the day, to attend her stricken sister. It was well she had done so, as before the noon of the next day Constance died, after exacting from her sister a promise to adopt as her own an infant boy named Walter, should it please Providence to decree the death of her wounded husband, Cecil Gray.

Gray only lived long enough to look upon the pale face of his dead wife, and to kiss his little son, comforted at his death by the promise which Maud had given, and which she felt assured that Leyton would approve.

The necessary preparations for the obsequies of

the departed, and the performance of them, occupied about ten days — ten short days fraught with such evil to Maud Leyton, that the whole colour of her life was changed by it.

Captain Leyton — he was captain now — had returned to England with a message from the queen; and, as the king lay at Uxbridge, thither Leyton went, and was most graciously received. Without difficulty he obtained permission to visit his family; and late on the night of the fourth day, he arrived at his ancestral home. He was fortunate, he thought, to find it unoccupied by strangers; and, with beating heart, he entered the old Hall, and then hurried unannounced to the chamber where he expected to find Maud. Neither light nor fire burned in the once-cheerful room! He called Maud's name — none answered! A chill fell upon his heart, as though some terrible evil was at hand. He called again; and Reuben entered the room, bearing a light, and followed by one of the lower servants, with materials for producing a fire.

"What means this, Reuben?" asked Leyton. "Where is your mistress?"

Reuben pointed to his fellow-servant, as though to intimate that silence in her presence was desirable.

"Cease your mumming, sirrah," cried Leyton; "and speak out. Leave the room, wench; and now speak, fellow."

Reuben crouched so low before his master that he might almost be said to be kneeling, as he faltered out —

“Oh, my honoured master, would that any tongue but mine had given you this sorry welcome to your home.”

Leyton stamped his foot impatiently on the ground, and said, “Where is your mistress — dead or ill?”

“I hope neither,” replied Reuben; “though heaven knows, there are worse things than death and sickness!”

Leyton caught the fellow by the throat, and hardly forbore dashing his fist into the man’s affrighted face, as he exclaimed —

“What damnable story art thou hatching? What dost thou mean, varlet?”

“Since you must hear the truth, dear master, better hear it from me that has served you long and truly than from others.”

Leyton sank down upon a chair; and, with staring eyes and parted lips, listened to what Reuben told him.

It was a strange story, and a wicked one. Reuben said that, two days gone, Mistress Leyton, accompanied by her waiting-woman only, had suddenly disappeared late at night, and unknown to every one at the Hall; that the horse-boy had saddled mistress’s horse, and also the one usually

ridden by Reuben, placing upon the latter a pillion for the waiting-woman. There was a grey gelding left in the stable, which had belonged to the man who accompanied Mistress Leyton in her flight.

What was Leyton to guess from this?

Reuben dare not surmise — it was not for a serving-man to do so; but Reuben told that Mistress Leyton, though sorely grieved when Master Leyton left to join the king's army, soon appeared — as Reuben had said before — to regain her pleasant mood and cheerful bearing; and her lodgings were, as had been the case before his master left, the morning rendezvous of the gayest gallants of the town. Reuben had often wondered how she could find spirits for such entertainment as she gave to those springals, of whom Master Cotterell was ever the most favoured.

Leyton's cheek went pale, and then blood-red almost, at Reuben's words. Reuben knew how thoroughly his master trusted his fair wife; and had, therefore, never sought to learn more than a faithful servant was bound to know, and had often chided others who had made free with the name of his mistress — nay, had often reproved Tabitha for receiving gifts from more than one of the gallants visiting their lodgings, and of whom none were so prodigal as Master Cotterell.

A sharp, short imprecation escaped from Leyton's lips — "What more?"

At last, Mistress Leyton returned to Leyton Hall; but she appeared ever restless and desponding, brooding hour by hour together, as though she missed the gaiety of the town, and prized no longer the country pleasures, which, in aforetime, had contented her. After awhile — she had been much apart from all — she decided upon quitting the Hall, and taking up her abode at the small Grange, which stood at the borders of the park, contenting herself with the attendance of Tabitha, her maid, the nurse, and two other servants. Reuben saw her but seldom, his business being at the Hall. At last, three days before the arrival of Leyton, the mistress had disappeared none knew whither.

“And the child — the child Alice?”

“Was at the Grange.”

What was the meaning of all Leyton saw and heard? What did Reuben wish him to understand — to guess at from what he had said?

Reuben remained silent until Leyton, drawing his sword, declared he would kill him where he stood, if he held back any further knowledge which he had, and which could elucidate the mysteries.

Reuben then produced from an inner pocket of his doublet a small packet of papers carefully tied together.

“You have insisted upon this evidence being given, master; and I pray thee, hold me harmless

from its consequences," said Reuben. "The day after my mistress fled I went into her room at the Grange, and lying on her open writing-table I found these papers; they may have a better meaning for you than I have been able to assign to them."

With trembling hands and burning eyes, Leyton unfolded and then read the papers —

"Fairest of created beings! Ovid tells how Icarus, flying too near the sun, fell into the sea and perished. Though fearing to fall like him — for thou art to me the sun of my existence — the intensity of my love makes me brave the danger. Fear bids me destroy this missive; but the memories of stolen glances and gentle words bid me withhold my hand." Leyton paused, and ground his teeth together, to suppress any expression of his anger. "If this missive be not my destruction, place to-night a candle in the window of thy chamber — as Sappho showed on the shores of the Hellespont a beacon to her Leander." "Cotterell's hand, 'fore heaven!" exclaimed Leyton. "If he's above ground ——" But he had opened the other folded paper, and what he saw made him stagger as though he had received a blow.

It was Maud's writing — his own Maud's — and what had she written?

"I have ever esteemed thee as a dear friend; but what has passed during the past few days had somewhat prepared me for thy letter ——" Nothing

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more! — what more was needed? The light, vain woman, who could, when peril surrounded her husband, court the silly flatteries of such creatures as Reuben had described, could only be destined to one end. And yet, how had Leyton been deceived? He had never detected anything to awaken a suspicion that Maud was such a mindless wanton! But men had been deceived — the wiser the more readily — since the world began: none so blind as those who loved as fondly as he had done. He who could not remember to have seen a fault in Maud — yet, being mortal, she must have shared the common lot, and had some imperfections.

Reuben did not let him doubt, when the doubt was in Maud's favour. With the perseverance of a sleuth-hound, he hunted the absent woman down; he needed no substratum of truth for what he told his half-maddened master; but with the skill of the Evil One he invented lie upon lie, until Leyton in his frenzy cursed his unhappy wife, and with the dawn of the next day had left Leyton Hall, taking with him his little daughter Alice, and Reuben for her attendant.

Tedious as the journey to London was, of necessity, it seemed doubly irksome now to Leyton, who counted every minute lost which kept him from his revenge upon Cotterell, and who he believed was certain to be found or heard of in the old City. At last London was reached; and having carefully

bestowed Alice with an aunt of Reuben, Leyton commenced his search for Cotterell, utterly regardless of the expiry of his leave of absence, and bent only upon one object — the destruction of his destroyer. He went the round of Cotterell's usual haunts, and learned at all of them that he had been absent more than a fortnight. This circumstance was only a confirmation of Cotterell's villany and Leyton's dishonour. It was almost maddening to leave London and his great wrong unrequited; but his duty to his king — now seemingly approaching the consummation of his fate — compelled him to abandon for the present a meeting with Cotterell. Having provided a nurse for Alice, Leyton prepared a document, by which he constituted Reuben his steward and custodian of Leyton Hall.

"You will be master until my return, Reuben," Leyton said — "if ever I go back to that dishonoured house. Should she —" he paused, and the quivering of his lips betrayed with what effort he controlled the tears welling from his heart. "Should she," he said, with great effort, "ever return, and need other help than she can command from her friends, spare nothing of mine — house nor land — that can give her comfort."

The strong man could say no more, or his "mother's weakness" would have shamed him.

We will not speak of Maud for the present, but

follow Leyton to the strife which was awaiting him.

The king had gone to Hull House, near Harborough, with the van of his army, the rear being encamped at Naseby. Rupert was at Harborough, and thither Leyton made his way, and was heartily welcomed by his brave commander.

"You are a laggard, Captain Leyton," said Rupert, "and I feared that to-morrow's sport would have been had without you. We shall have hot work, I promise you."

"The hotter the more welcome, your highness," replied Leyton. "I am in fighting humour, and I trust to your favour for a post where I may rid me of it."

"Never fear, *camarado!*" replied the prince; "we will not be far asunder."

Leyton rejoiced in this near approach to a bloody contest, as, for a time, he looked upon the prospect of death almost with a desire for its accomplishment, but then two great aspirations found a place in his thoughts, and he cared to live — one was the hope of meeting Cotterell — another his parental desire to be the guardian, the guide, the father to his deserted innocent — his Alice — "sole daughter of his house and heart."

The story of Naseby Field is still told by those who dwell about it. Mill Hill is shown, where Fairfax had taken position on the 14th June, 1645 —

the right commanded by General Cromwell and the left by Ireton. On the opposite hill was the king's battle, and between them, you are still shown where Rupert made his desperate charge — where Cromwell, shouting his battle-cry, "God is our strength," drove back Langdale's horse — where, after three hours of fierce fighting, the army of King Charles was routed, never to re-assemble in defence of its royal master.

"We, after three hours' fight, very doubtful," Cromwell wrote to Mr. Speaker, "at last routed his army; killed and took about 5000 — very many officers, but of what quality we know not. We took also about two hundred carriages, all he had; and all his guns, twelve in number."

Laconic as this despatch is, it contained the materials for the history of England for the next fifteen years.

The king's cause was now utterly lost, although the war continued in various parts of the kingdom. Leyton, however, had obtained his discharge from Prince Rupert before that general's departure from Bristol. He knew that he incurred some danger from the victorious party by appearing openly in London, but he disregarded such peril in his desire to find the man who had wronged him so much. They met at last in the room of the Mermaid where we were first introduced to Cotterell. Although Leyton had been wronged only in intention by his false friend,

Cotterell was so oppressed by the sense of the injury he had contemplated, that his bearing towards Leyton was that of a self-convicted man.

The two men were alone in the room. Leyton fixed his eyes upon his foe, the while his brows almost met, and his features, bronzed by exposure in the camp, became almost blackened by the rush of blood to their surface.

Cotterell saw at a glance he had been detected or exposed, and, cowering almost, he stepped backward, as though fearing some violence from Leyton.

Leyton spoke not a word, but quietly unfolding Cotterell's letter to Maud, and which he had never parted from since Reuben gave it to him, he held it out for Cotterell's inspection.

As the man thus silently accused made no sign — spoke no word, Leyton said —

“Do you know that letter? Was it yours?”

Cotterell instinctively placed his hand upon his sword. The action was a sufficient acknowledgment.

“You own it, despicable villain!” cried Leyton; and then, calmly folding the offending paper and replacing it in his bosom, he drew his sword, and called to Cotterell to do the same.

“Draw villain! — draw instantly! Let me not commit murder!”

“Leyton, hear me —”

“Not if I were your confessor, you treacherous

villain!" replied Leyton. "Has your hot blood grown cold? Let that warm it;" and with the flat of the blade of his sword he struck Cotterell sharply on the arm.

Cotterell was no coward, but conscious of the wrong he had intended Leyton, he would have avoided the chance of doing him any bodily injury.

He knew himself to be a perfect swordsman, but what Leyton lacked in skill he now made up in impetuosity. With a fury which nothing could withstand, he pressed Cotterell into one corner of the room, and disregarding all the usual forms of attack and defence, appeared likely to overcome his adversary by mere physical force. Cotterell defended himself manfully, skilfully, for some time, but at last Leyton seized his opponent's sword in his left hand, ungloved as it was, and attempted to wrench the weapon away from him.

"Madman!" cried Cotterell; "I will not be butchered! quit my sword!" but as Leyton struggled till he had obtained possession of the weapon, Cotterell drew out a small wheel-lock pistol, and fired full in the face of Leyton.

The wounded man uttered a cry and fell senseless to the ground.

The report of the pistol and the previous noise had brought Magnus and his people to the place of encounter, and more than one was a witness of Cotterell's act.

"You will bear witness, all of you," said Cotterell, "that I shot in self-defence!"

"You did! you did," replied Magnus; "I will take oath to't," and would have done so on the bare word of such a customer as Master Cotterell. "But be advised by me, sir. Our city magistrates are cold-blooded fellows, Master Cotterell, and would clap you up for trial an' you were taken before them. Get you gone down to the river. If Master Leyton be dead, he will give us some trouble. If he be only stunned, as I fancy, he will give more; but that will be paid for, so no matter."

Cotterell was fully sensible of the soundness of this advice, and before the confusion had subsided, he made the best of his way down Bread-street, and taking boat at the stairs, was rowed to Southwark, whence, if need be, he could get to the coast, and so be out of harm's way.

An apothecary was soon found, and he, after an examination of the wounded man, pronounced the wound not mortal, although he feared the shot had destroyed the sight of both the patient's eyes, but of that he could not be certain. His conjecture proved, alas, to be true, and when Leyton recovered from his wound it was to find himself in total blindness.

Leyton had felt his supposed dishonour so acutely that he had carefully avoided the society of all his former friends, and now when this calamity had overtaken him, he resisted all the entreaties of Jacob

Magnus (to whom he was known), that any intimation of his condition should be communicated to friend or foe.

Jacob was always a man to mind his own business, especially if he were well paid for it, and Leyton, with a true knowledge of mine host, had taken effectual means to secure the silence of Jacob and his household.

As soon as Leyton had quite recovered his strength, he made arrangements for the care of Alice, and hearing that his friend and general, Prince Rupert, had departed for Sicily, Leyton determined to follow him there, more from the influence of habit than from any seeking for sympathy which the rough soldier might have accorded to his tried companion in arms.

Reuben was secretly summoned to town, but only to receive certain instructions for the future; but much of his responsibility was removed, the Parliament having sequestered Leyton Hall as being the property of a recusant, and one of the enemies of the people. Not one word of Maud passed the lips of either master or servant, and she who had been so beloved was now as the dead — ah! far less than the dead — to the husband who had loved her so fondly.

When Reuben parted for the last time, perhaps, from the master whom he had so cruelly abused, he

went direct to the woman he had called his aunt, and who had charge of little Alice.

He closed the door of the room where his aunt was seated carefully after him, having first looked out on to the landing as though to be sure he had not been watched or followed.

"Well, aunt," he said, in a low, hoarse whisper, "I have done what I swore to do ten long years ago."

The old woman so addressed, waved her head to and fro, as though deprecating what Reuben had done.

"I know! I know!" she said. "I know what we both swore on that wretched night, Reuben; but 'vengeance is mine, saith the Lord.'"

"True, aunt, and He chooses his own instruments. I and you are so chosen," answered Reuben. "His sin hath found him out. His punishment has come from those he most wronged."

"I fear it is sinfulness, Reuben," said the woman; "that we shall be judged for what you have done."

"I have no fear, aunt," replied Reuben. "I have thought night and day on the wickedness of the past, of the misery that man brought into your house and into mine. I have never had from my sight the thing we looked upon, and I could not have died anywhere with that wrong unavenged, and as I had sworn to do it ——"

"And yet we pray, 'Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that sin against us,'" said the

woman. "Oh, Reuben! we cannot pray for our sins to be forgiven, and we shall perish in the wrath to come!"

"Aunt, you have been too much of late to those conventicles, as they are called, and have been frightened by their tales of fire and brimstone," said Reuben, doggedly. "We made a vow, and, as I remember, we prayed for death — ay, worse than death, to ourselves — if we should be forsworn. I dare not brave that, aunt, and I have kept my oath. Where he loved he has been deceived. By her whom he loved he has had his heart bruised! And as she led him to break the promise by which he broke a heart as loving and as tender as her own, she lives a widowed wife and a sorrowing mother."

"Peace, Reuben!" cried the woman. "I cannot listen to such a story of the wicked thing we have done. As I look upon that sleeping innocent and know what misery we have worked its parents, I half resolve to seek Master Leyton, and on my knees confess the sin we have committed."

"It is lucky, then, that, you will see Master Leyton no more. Here is the money for your charges, and in the morning a person will come for the child. Master Leyton leaves England to-morrow."

The woman let the money remain uncounted upon the table for some time, continuing to sigh and

moan as though she were having a sharp contest with her conscience; but Reuben chinked the money-bag, and the sound of the "incentive to evil," scared away the dame's good resolutions.

Leyton Hall was, as we have said, one of those moated manor houses which began early in Elizabeth's reign to take the place of the battlemented strongholds of the olden time. It stood on the spur of a lofty hill, on which grew a cluster of stately trees much older than the Hall itself. A park of some hundred acres stretched down to the river Dove, after that pleasant stream had flowed through romantic Dove Dale. In one corner of the park stood the smaller dwelling called the Grange, which had usually been occupied by the elder sons of the Leytons, and was now occupied by Mistress Maud.

As Mistress Leyton, on her return home, caught the first sight of the noble Hall, a hundred pleasant fancies came into her mind. She pictured to herself the delight of Alice at seeing her again, and of the pleasure the child would feel at having a little play-fellow like her cousin Walter brought home to share her sports, and in aftertime her studies.

Maud felt assured that Leyton would approve the promise she had made, and would find his pleasure, when the cruel war was ended, in training the pretty boy in manly exercises; and perhaps the cousins might in time to come grow to be lovers —

such unions had been ere now, and Walter Gray would be no unworthy match for the heiress of Leyton Hall.

Unhappy Maud! her pleasant dreams were soon to be dispelled.

She had scarcely alighted at her door, when Dorothy, the nurse, met her, and wailing, "like one mourning the dead," she fell upon her knees.

Maud, panic-stricken, had scarcely power to ask if her child were dead, and when assured that Alice was living, the revulsion of feeling was more than she could bear, and she sank down senseless. But why dwell upon every phase of grief shown by the bereaved mother?

At first she could not be made to comprehend what had occurred. Her husband had been there and taken away the child? — leaving no word, no line? Yes, Reuben had said he had been entrusted with some message for his mistress. Why was he not there to deliver it? He came after awhile, and gave Maud a scrap of paper — open, unsealed. The words written upon it almost blinded her as she read them —

"Miserable woman! Your infamy is known to me. We never meet again this side the grave! — E. L."

Infamy! What did he mean? Never meet again? What did he mean? She had never wronged him even in thought. She loved him with her whole

soul, as she had done since she had been his wife. Never meet again! She could not understand the meaning of the words, and Reuben would not help her to a solution of the riddle.

At length, by the aid of Tabitha, she gained a clue to what the scrap of paper meant. Her bewildered brain could scarcely comprehend the new horror, and when it did so, it was but for a moment or two, and then a frenzy seized her, which only changed to settled insanity.

Tabitha had summoned such friends and connexions of the family as were within reach, and their counsel advised that Reuben should be despatched in search of Leyton. But Tabitha earnestly objected to this proposal. She had, she knew not why, conceived a distrust of Reuben; and with a boldness which surprised her auditors, she did not hesitate to express her suspicions of Reuben's dishonesty to her mistress.

"No one word of pity has he spoken," said Tabitha; "but with a cold sneer upon his ill-favoured face, he has sought to excuse the wickedness which has been done. 'No doubt our master had reason.' 'We can know nothing of the cause.' By my faith, I would not have that fellow's conscience for the king's crown."

What then was to be done? Many were ready to go in search of Leyton, but who could point out

the trail they should follow? Tabitha at last bethought her of her uncle Magnus; and believing that she could better manage matters with him than could the friends of her mistress, it was arranged that she should depart secretly to London and make inquiries.

But Jacob Magnus had been paid well to hold his peace on all that concerned Master Leyton; and he prided himself on keeping his engagements, whether they were for good or evil. Tabitha, however, was not to be easily quieted, as she had discovered that her uncle and aunt had some knowledge of the matter in hand; and at last she succeeded in gaining a clue to the whereabouts of the woman who had had charge of Alice, and whom Reuben called aunt.

The woman, having left her old lodging, was traced with some difficulty by Tabitha and her old sweetheart, Thomas Handy — who, by the by, had been long discarded by Tabitha for a smart serving-man, who, in his turn, had jilted her.

The woman occupied now a miserable room in the Mint, and was lying sick and penniless. So long as the money she had received from Leyton lasted, she had quieted her self-reproaches for her connivance at Reuben's wickedness; but now — her money spent, chiefly in strong waters — she, fancying death was at her bedside, became terri-

fied, remembering the denunciations of evil-doers which she had heard in the conventicles, to which curiosity more than any worthier feeling had allured her. In this condition Tabitha fortunately found her, and partly by increasing her fears, and partly by a considerable bribe, the woman was brought to confession.

She could not say where Master Leyton had gone; beyond seas she knew it was; to the Barbadoes, she fancied. She had not seen him after his fight with one Master Cotterell.

“Why had he fought with him?”

“Ay, there was the wickedness of what had been done — she and Reuben. But she would make a clean breast of it, even if Reuben should come and kill her.”

Her daughter Grace was a buxom lass, with a round form, and rosy cheeks, and hazel eyes. Reuben had courted her, and she had promised to marry him; but the young master of Leyton Hall came in her way, and an old story had to be told again. When her shame became known, Reuben abused her sadly, and poor Grace, betrayed and deserted, drowned herself. It was Reuben who had found and brought home the body of Grace; and, when the poor corpse lay with matted hair and bedrabbled clothes, lover and mother knelt beside it and swore a vow of vengeance. To accomplish this wicked

vow, Reuben had obtained service at the Hall, to watch and watch until he could find a chance to strike a blow that should wound worse than the murderer's knife. And the woman told all that Reuben had done: how he had lied to his trusting master — what proofs he had given him that the wife was false — and what a terrible infliction had overtaken Leyton. Tabitha shuddered as she listened to this narrative, and then, throwing down the money she had promised to the woman, hastened out into the street, and alarmed Thomas by her affrighted looks, fairly winding him by the rapid pace at which she traversed London Bridge and the streets which were between it and the Mermaid.

Tabitha returned into Derbyshire as soon as she could, and having recounted what she had learned, the friends of Maud consulted how they should proceed against the villain Reuben; but the law seemed to be powerless, and all personal retribution appeared so utterly inadequate to the crime, that the fellow was allowed to escape for the time.

He was not, however, to be long at his ease. The Parliamentary Sequestrators laid their hands on Leyton Hall, and Reuben, after a time, his crime being known, was shunned by all, and fled none knew whither. More than three years passed before

Maud's reason was entirely restored, and then a gentle melancholy distinguished her. Her chief solace was in the affection of her nephew, Walter Gray.

CHAPTER V.

OLIVER CROMWELL was dead, and his son Richard proved but a feeble successor. The hopes of the Royalists seemed to revive, the more especially as the people at large began to tire of the domination of the Puritans, whose peculiar views of social life were strongly at variance with the natural joviality of the English character. The Puritans had long put down the most favourite amusements of the people; and the Lord of Mistle, May games, Plough Monday dances, church ales and wakes, were only heard of in the tales of old men and women. The Puritans condemned all dancing in mixed company of the sexes, though some held that "men by themselves, and women by themselves," might dance without sin to recreate the mind oppressed with some great toil and labour. Political reasons were also concurring to put an end to the Commonwealth, and more than one rising had taken place in favour of monarchy. As one of the consequences of the unsettled times, a number of loose characters — disbanded soldiers, turned apprentices, and idle ruffians — were found in various parts of the country, living by their wits or

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Political reasons were also concurring to put an end to the Commonwealth, and more than one rising had taken place in favour of monarchy. As one of the consequences of the unsettled times, a number of loose characters — disbanded soldiers, ruined spendthrifts, and idle rufflers — were found in various parts of the country, living by their wits or

their violences. Among other disreputable combinations, was one generally known as "The King's Rogues," although they assumed to be honest Royalists, who had authority to collect any subsidies for the king's use from those loyal persons who were confiding enough to entrust money to them. Not far from Leyton Hall was a village long since fallen to decay, and at the time of our story occupied by a small community of agriculturists who prided themselves upon their loyalty to the king. On the outskirts of this village was a ruinous farmhouse, which no one cared to own, as there were scarcely two rooms in it which were habitable, and the roof had long since been scattered by the winds. The kitchen was tolerably wind and weather tight; and there, on a March night, had assembled some dozen men, more or less bearing evidence of their claim to be ranked as King's Rogues. They were all armed with swords, and most of them wore the long buff boots with which we are familiar in portraits of horsemen of the period, though, sooth to say, they possessed but one sorry jade, grazing in the lane hard by. The lace and other tawdry with which some of their coats were tricked out were sadly tarnished and faded, and as the wearers were seen by the dim light of two candles, no honest man would have cared to be in their company.

They were jovial, however, although the great pitcher on the table was empty: and one, who seemed

to be an authority, volunteered a song. The proposal was received with much applause, and the fellow roared out some doggerel which expressed his supreme contempt for all which pertained to Round-heads and Tubthumpers.

When the applause which greeted the conclusion of the song had subsided, the thirsty vocalist looked into the empty pitcher, and then replaced it on the table with a deep sigh.

"Ha!" said the man — he was called Boardwine — "when the king gets his own again, we'll have no more of these beggars' revels, drinking small ale in bye-places. We shall have gold to spend, and rulers that honour good liquor."

"It's someway strange," observed a man who had suffered the loss of an eye either in battle or a brawl, "that we've heard nought of late from our friends in London."

"I doubt if they're true men," said Boardwine; "I sent to one of them for the loan of a few pounds, and the niggardly cur returned for answer that he'd see me to the gallows ere he'd lend me a stiver. That was his answer after the sacrifices I have made in the royal cause!"

"What sacrifices hast thou made?" asked a villainous-looking fellow with a red cock's-feather in a very battered beaver.

"What sacrifices!" replied Boardwine, with well-assumed surprise; "dost not remember me a slim,

sober lad, that could have crept into an eel skin — one that never knew anything stronger than the flavour of his grandmother's mead? And what am I now? A concentrated larder — a peripatetic beer-barrel!"

The group found so much humour in this speech of their comrade that they roared with laughter.

"But what hath the royal cause to do with that?" asked Cocktail.

"Why, thou art dull-witted for want of liquor," replied Boardwine. "Have I not advocated the king's cause in every ale-house in the county? Could I have done that without acquiring thirst? Could I thirst and not seek to allay it? Could I drink, and not feed upon the liquor?"

The argument was admitted to be conclusive, and Boardwine declared to be the most loyal subject that ever king had, and might look for his reward should the king get his own again, as the phrase went.

"Should!" roared Boardwine; "he will, and that ere long, I say. Men are tired of wearing their faces after the fashion of folk with the colic. The tavern is getting more relished than the conventicle, and your Puritan ranter must out of his barrel, as it will soon be put to its right use again."

"I think you're right," said Cocktail.

"I am always right," replied Boardwine. "When have pipe and tabor been heard on Sundays until

yesterday, even in this, the most loyal village in England? Has not crop-eared Zedekiah Waterwell, that keeps the public, set up a tent for the use of the market-folk who pass along?"

"All good signs," said Cocktail, whilst the others joined in chorus.

"That they are!" continued Boardwine. "The Roundheads have had their day. Ho! for the Cavaliers!" and then mimicking the drawl affected by the chosen, he added, "I know of vessels of gold and vessels of silver which shall assuredly be consigned to the melting-pot."

At this moment the door was opened, and a wretched-looking man entered, bearing a small keg filled with ale, but which he said would be the last that Zedekiah would score against the fraternity.

"He has no more soul than a shotten herring!" cried Boardwine; "his true name is Dickory, which he forswore after he ran away from Worcester fight, and to pleasure his landlord, took on him to be called Zedekiah. But fill your stoups, lads, and I'll sing you another stave."

Boardwine had scarcely begun, when a loud knocking at the door stopped the harmony.

"See to the door, Reuben," said Boardwine. "We receive no stranger who has not the password of our order."

But before the wretched creature who had brought the liquor could reach the door, it was boldly opened

by a man whose high steeple-crowned hat and closely-cropped hair proclaimed him of the opposite faction. The Puritan stopped when he saw the group before him, and drawing himself up (as was the manner of his sect) he drawled, rather than said —

“Lo! is the bull parochial given to vocal ebullitions?” adding, as man after man rose up, “what! does one of the chosen affright the sons of recusant fathers?”

“Affright!” replied Boardwine, adding a fierce oath; “not a host of ye. But this is no place for spies and informers.”

“Then shouldst thou stop the chinks in the wall, or the noise in thy throat, if thou wouldst not have men know thou art a friend of the man Charles Stuart. What if I seek a justice?”

“Men of my kidney,” said Boardwine, “never give the law more chances than they can help, master, ——” But before the speaker could draw his long tuck from its scabbard, the Puritan had tossed off his hat, and burst into a loud laugh. He was recognised instantly, and hailed as “Dick Hum-mall.”

“Put up thy spit, bully lad, and give me welcome,” said the new comer; and in a moment every man offered his stoup.

“Two hands — two cups,” said Dick, taking the proffered beakers, and tasting first one and then the other.

"Small ale, as I am a sinner," said Dick. "Is this your welcome to a king's courier?"

"Gentlemen, gentlemen! I am ashamed of you," said Boardwine, holding out his hat. "Some of ye have purses, and yet I stand here like a beggar."

More than one of the group threw some small coin into the hat, and Boardwine, jingling the pieces together, said —

"Ha! that's music. Now, Reuben, rouse up, and fetch a gallon of double ale."

The wretched man approached to receive the money; and so foul and woe-begone he seemed, that Hummall drew back instinctively. Reuben received the money, and shuffled out of the room.

"Who is that fellow of 'shreds and patches?'" asked Hummall. "He has made free with some scarecrow's wardrobe. Who is he?"

"Old Reuben Studely," answered Boardwine. "Once as sharp-witted as a Newgate lawyer. He was steward to Captain Leyton that fought so boldly at Naseby."

"Leyton, Leyton! Ah! I remember," said Hummall. "He lived at the Hall hard by? His wife had a roomy heart, and took in another lodger — she left her husband? I knew somewhat of her waiting-maid in aforetime."

"The same," replied Boardwine. "The father

carried his daughter over seas, none knew where. The father died; and a stranger has but now taken possession of the old Hall. But tell me, how came you to discover us?"

"It is my wont to take unfrequented paths, as less likely to lead to the gallows!" answered Hummall. "As I passed by the end of the thicket here, I heard and recognised thy bull-like voice. But I've news from the king!"

A spontaneous hurrah was the rejoinder to this piece of information.

"The king, gentlemen — the king wants money," said Hummall.

"Call that news?" replied Boardwine. Why, it's as old as the Protectorate!"

"True; but who'd pause now that the game turns in our favour?" said Hummall. "General Monk — Old George, as they call him — is known to be with us; so out with your canvas money-bags, and replenish the king's exchequer."

Boardwine drew forth the empty pockets of his slops, and said, "This comes of loyalty, Dick."

Hummall laughed, as he rejoined, "Think ye I would bleed the king's rogues! If I wanted wool, I should not skin a wolf. Is there no loyal sheep left hereabouts that is worth the shearing?"

Before the question could be answered, Reuben returned with the ale; and its attractions silenced

conversation for a time. Reuben, as was his wont, slunk away to the side of the fire, and seemed indifferent to all that was passing around him.

Boardwine, after a time, drew Hummall aside, and having lighted his pipe at the fire, said, in a low voice —

“There is one lamb, Dick, that I have heard bleat the king’s name; and he is still in his first fleece.”

“Good.”

“But honour amongst gentlemen — the lamb is mine own,” said Boardwine.

“I understand you. Who is he?” asked Hummall.

“Young Walter Gray. His father fell at Marston Moor. He is nephew to Mistress Leyton, who lives, as you know, hard-by at the Grange.”

Reuben gave a start; but the motion was unnoticed by the speaker.

“This lad is the pet of his old aunt; and she hath lands,” said Boardwine.

“Good again!” answered Hummall. “The precious metals come out of the earth.”

“He must have credit also,” observed Boardwine.

“Good again! Credit is a thing much needed by the king, and his poor rogues,” replied Hummall.

“True. I know not the man who would trust me with a suit. Dost thou, Dick?” asked Board-

wine, showing a formidable, ill-darned rent in his broadcloth breeches,

"I know but one," answered Dick, gravely.

"Name him, Dick, for the love of decency. Let me test his credulity," said Boardwine.

"I mean," replied Dick, pausing for a moment; "I mean the man who hath charge of the pillory."

"The jest is damnably out of place, Dick," answered Boardwine. "'Thou art well clothed and well stocked with gold-finches — for I heard them sing in your pocket — and should spare those who have stood back and edge to the royal cause, when the wind finds entrance through many a cranny, and the colour of a Jacobus is almost forgotten."

Hummall made amends for his unseemly jest by quietly putting a gold piece into the hand of his offended comrade.

"And now friends," said Hummall, turning away from the fire, "I have not sought you for nothing. A little loyal bird — I would call it a kingfisher had it a song — a loyal bird, I say, has sung to me of gold and jewels to be had for the gathering. But we must be prudent; and, above all, I must not be suspected of holding converse with such sons of Belial as you, gentlemen. Let one of you meet me to-morrow in Dovedale, nigh to the great stone in mid-stream; they call it hereabouts, if I remember truly, the Pike Rock."

"I know it well," said Cocktail. "When a boy, I have taken many a lusty fish in that water."

"Well, then, to roost at once," said Hummall; "and sleep off the fat ale which now oppresses thee, and bring a clear head in the morning — nay, in the afternoon — if you can fast sober so long."

"I drink no more than my fellows," grumbled Cocktail; "an' if thou fearest to trust me, let another to the rendezvous. I have been trusted by those who carried a leading-staff, ay, and ridden with a trumpet to give credit to my message."

"And shalt again," said Hummall, laughing. "Let me have my jest when in free company. I have enough of long faces and vinegar phrases when I am one of the chosen."

Bidding his comrades "good-night," Hummall assumed the manners of the sectarians he resembled in garb, and forthwith took his way to the village.

Richard Hummall was a man of some importance, and made so by the times. He had formerly been a serving-man to one of Leyton's friends. It was then that he had entered into a flirtation with Tabitha, for no other reason than to extinguish the aspirations of the pious drawer, Thomas Handy. That triumph effected, Dick had proved faithless, and Tabitha had lost sight of him for years. Hummall had found better employment, as he considered,

than that of a serving-man, and had become a sort of spy or agent of the Royalist party. In this character Master Hummall contrived to keep a well-filled purse, thanks to the liberality of the king's partisans. He also, from time to time, supplied valuable information to those who were always watching to restore the monarchy. Richard Hummall was perfectly unscrupulous as to the means he employed to gain his ends. He could sacrifice friend or foe, and some information had reached him which he fancied he could make conducive to his own interest and to the "royal cause" (the phrase always on his lips), if he could establish friendly relations with Tabitha. He had heard, and he thought truly, that the new-comer at Leyton Hall had brought with him a vast amount of wealth in very portable materials and from other sources of information he was sure also that there was an easy way of obtaining access to the Hall by means of a private door. He had such an opinion of Tabitha that he believed, if a secret way existed, she would have been certain to have used it, and — well, we shall see.

He had not thought of Reuben Studley — Reuben, who had fallen so low. Shunned, despised by all who had heard his story, the wretched man seemed spell-bound to the place where his guilt was known. He could not leave it; he would have been incapable of assigning a reason for his stay; but

there was a vague feeling — it was not hope — that by some accident he might lighten the load weighing on his conscience, and perhaps be permitted to die peacefully.

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CHAPTER VI.

THE information which Hummall had communicated to his associates was true in part. When Leyton, under the assumed name of Maybourne, left England, he remained a short time in Sicily, and then, in the course of the next year, took up his residence in Spain. By the influence of the Miltons with Cromwell and his ministers, the escheat of Leyton Hall was reversed on very favourable terms to the self-exiled royalist, whose motive for quitting England was supposed to have been purely political, and domestic cause was never suspected by his acquaintance, although surmised by his more intimate friends. Leyton (as we shall continue to call him) made some singularly successful ventures, and in the course of a few years had grown to be a man of great wealth, despite the terrible affliction of blindness.

Alice was instructed in all the refinements that money could obtain, but those great teachers — a mother's love, a mother's watchfulness, could not be purchased, and she imbibed some of the national peculiarities which distinguished the people amongst whom she had been nurtured. She had heard, from

her earliest years, love spoken of as the great charm of woman's existence, and had come to associate that passion, which should be purity itself, with an indulgence in intrigue and coquetry. These errors were only parasites to her true woman's nature, but for a time they had their influence.

As time wore on, Leyton had a growing desire to return to his native land, and yet it was difficult to overcome the repugnance he felt to recall his sorrows and dishonour where they were now forgotten. He had often doubted if his decision had been just towards Maud, but

"Trifles light as air

Are to the jealous confirmation strong

As proofs of holy writ."

And he had allowed the trifling fact of Maud's reticence as to her knowledge of Sir Ralph Newberry, Cotterell's idle boasting and his sudden accession to wealth, to add increased importance to the fragment of the letter that had been given to him by Reuben.

But the love of country conquered at last; and collecting his wealth together in a form most convenient for its transmission, Leyton returned to the home of his fathers, but for a time retaining the appellation he had borne so long.

His chief attendant was a man whom he had rescued from the savage persecution to which his race was subject, and which the bigot Philip III. had instituted fifty years before. This Hafed was

devoted to his master, owing him life and liberty, and he would have sacrificed both had occasion required him to do so. For Alice he entertained the same devotion, and a feeling which had all the attributes of a perfect love, except its hopes. She never moved abroad but Hafed followed her like her shadow. She never slept but the faithful Hafed kept watch near her.

One peculiarity of the man was his singular silence. He rarely spoke, and never but when the discharge of his duties rendered speech absolutely necessary. He as rarely smiled, as though he had some hidden sorrow ever oppressing him, and yet his swarthy and expressive face would suddenly beam with pleasure at any command — any word of commendation from Alice or her father.

Hafed was the only attendant whom Leyton brought with him to England; and when possession was taken of Leyton Hall — how sadly changed by time and neglect! — an old woman, a stranger to the neighbourhood, who had been found in possession, was retained as housekeeper. This arrangement was made by Leyton that he might avoid recognition; though few, alas! would have discovered in the sunburnt features and the long white beard of Master Maybourne, the once handsome lord of Leyton Hall.

So much premised, let us saunter, some month after Leyton's return, through the pleasant dale of

the Dove, whose clear swift waters promise good sport to a young angler casting his fly with less care than a practised fisher should exercise. Ever and anon his eyes are turned to a fissure in the rocks, until weary with his lack of sport, he rests his rod upon the ground, and leans his head against the pliant wood. Presently he starts at what has met his gaze, and a glow like sunshine comes upon his face.

From the fissure in the rock have come a young girl and a swarthy follower. Both are attired in garments of a foreign fashion. They pause before they descend, as though the maiden hesitated from natural delicacy, but the youth—his name is Walter Gray—has cast down his rod and hastened to meet her.

It is difficult—very difficult to trace the early foot-prints of first love; by what strange sympathy young hearts are drawn together; how they grow bold from fear, eloquent from silence, hopeful from what impedes, until “they love, and love for ever.”

And so we must accept the knowledge that Walter and Alice had met before, and daily desired to meet again, nor seek to listen to the pretty talk which brought such pleasant smiles into both their handsome faces, until the time of parting came, and then their clasped hands parted reluctantly.

Though the swarthy face of Hafed grew dark almost to blackness, he had stood aloof, motionless,

like a man carved out of the rock, and then followed without a word his young mistress through the subterraneous passage which led to the vaults of the Hall.

"In the good old days," of which we sometimes hear the praises, when men burnt and sacked each other's dwellings, and valued life at the toss of a pike, or the thrust of a sword — a secret outlet was thought a necessary addition to houses of any importance. The exact position of such passages was known generally only to the owner of the house and his most confidential servants, and in order to preserve the knowledge of its whereabouts, it was not unfrequently marked upon the ground plan of the building. Alice in searching for some papers required by her father, had come upon the plan of Leyton Hall, and having made the discovery of a secret passage, girl-like, from curiosity, resolved to explore it. Hafed was, of course, her attendant, and her delight was extreme when she found that, by its means she could reach Dovedale readily. She had not met Walter Gray then, but when they had come to know each other, her Spanish proclivities made her think this secret way had been made for lovers.

Hummall had also heard that there was some secret means of access to Leyton Hall, and nothing deterred by his former ill-treatment of Tabitha, he resolved to get speech with her, and trust to the

chapter of accidents to obtain the object he had in view.

As it was against Hummall's nature to go straight to his object, when he could find a crooked way, he determined to make his approaches in the disguise of one of the peddling men, who traversed the country to dispose of their wares.

Master Robin did not care to encumber himself with merchandize, and therefore, retaining somewhat of his Puritanical seeming, he started for the Grange, with a few of the little books or tracts, then as plentiful as blackberries.

It was early morning when Hummall presented himself in the garden of Mistress Leyton's house. With a loud drawling voice he announced: — "Here's the choicest morsels of doctrine fresh from London; 'The Double Rowelled Spur for the Slow in Grace;' 'Limed Twigs to Catch Sinners Hop-ping,'" and some others whose titles are unfitted for ears polite.

"This is the house," he thought; "and I could have been sworn on my missal that Tabitha would not have heard a pedlar's voice and kept within door. Mayhap the merchandize I have been crying hath no longer any charms for her. She was ever variable in her love and her religion." Then he bawled out: "Here! here! ladies, the newest patterns of coifs and farthingales, such as are worn on the court days of the Lady Mayoress of London, by the

ladies of the wards within and without!" The bolts of the door were heard to be withdrawn. "Ha! ha!" thought Hummall, "the lure is right this time;" and Tabitha, in the full beauty of her three and thirtieth year, presented herself.

"What hast thou, Master Pedlar?" said Tabitha; "coifs and farthingales? Let me have sight of your pack."

"Daughter of foolishness," drawled Dick, "I did but cry such vanities to lure thee to me. I do but vend the goodly propoundings of worthy Simeon Bellowsgrowl and Ezekiah Leatherlungs."

"Then you have brought your pigs to a wrong market," replied Tabitha, angry at her disappointment. "We want none of their grunting here. I had enough and to spare of your sort sixteen years ago;" and Tabitha was about to close the door.

"Stay, maiden," said Hummall; "heaven hath made thee fair——"

"I know it," answered Tabitha, sharply; "and I will show my gratitude by not spoiling a cheerful face, swallowing your puritanical vinegar." She was again retreating when Hummall said in a loud whisper, "Tabitha."

What could she do but turn and stare at the man?

"Tabitha, am I forgotten?" asked Hummall, in his natural voice. "Did the barber when he cropped my crown cut me from your remembrance?"

"Why, as I live," cried Tabitha, "it's Robin Hummall!"

"Yes, Tabitha, your own Robin. You should know these stockings, preserved for seventeen years. They're your own knitting." (A pure invention of the moment, be sure.)

"If they be," replied Tabitha, "you left me to pay for the worsted; they cost me a groat a leg."

"Then I'm up to my knees in debt," said Hummall, with an impudent grin. "Tabitha, what does it matter? Let our fortunes be the same. One heart one pocket."

"That story wont do again, Robin," replied Tabitha, shaking her head. "One heart may be all very well, but next time I'm in love, we'll have each a pocket. But goode'en, Robin, I have done with you."

"Done with me?" cried Robin, affecting surprise.

"Lo! what a paradox is woman. She trusts herself to a man, and wont give him credit for eight-pence."

"Two groats are not so easily come by," said Tabitha; "but lovers can be found on every hedge."

"How lightly women talk of their blessings," said Hummall. "Come, Tabitha, let's begin afresh. Let's be friends."

"Oh! I am friends enough," replied Tabitha, lingering rather at the door.

"When we were friends before, Tabitha, you

always asked me to a stoup of ale. I'm still the same man, Tabitha. Dry as ever!"

Tabitha shook her head. "Robin, there is nothing but poison to thee at hand — small ale. Master Walter hath taken the key of the strong."

"Master Walter?" said Hummall, thoughtfully; "he is called thy mistress's nephew, and is bravely petted. Eh, Tabitha?"

"He is entertained as he deserves to be," replied Tabitha.

"Oh, nothing more!" answered Hummall, adding with a wicked leer, "Lovers grow on every hedge."

"I don't heed your gibe, Robin, not I!" replied Tabitha. "Master Walter is out of my reach. He's a fit mate for the new-comer's daughter at Leyton Hall."

"I have heard it said that the lady at the Hall is beautiful, and the father rich as Queen Sheba, and hath chests of gold and jewels brought from beyond seas," said Hummall.

"So 'tis rumoured at the village alehouse," replied Tabitha. "They say Master Maybourne keeps both door and window barred, and admits no one, so how it can be known what riches he hath within, I guess not."

As Tabitha said this, Hummall stole quietly towards the door, and leaning against the wall of the house, so that he could almost whisper into Tabitha's ear, said —

"Tabitha, shouldst like to be a lady? — to wear nothing but brocades as thick as deal boards, and brooches as large as wooden platters?"

"Should I not?" replied Tabitha, wondering what was Robin's meaning.

"To have six fat liverymen to wait on thee at table, and such a husband as your own Robin for every day in the week?"

"Hum! No," replied Tabitha, shaking her head; "with such a burthen as thee I would forego all the rest. I know you, Robin, and wouldn't trust thee again —"

"Not for that?" asked Hummall, showing her a golden doubloon. "Take it." Tabitha did so, struck by the size and beauty of the coin. "I will make that pretty fellow five, if you will help me to a sight of those chests they speak of. There is a secret door — a passage — a somewhat — and thou knowest it."

"Here, Robin," answered Tabitha, red with suppressed anger. "Take back your gold piece. I was a fool to think well enough of thee to handle it. A rogue in love is never honest in anything else."

As Hummall hesitated to take back the money, Tabitha threw it on the ground, saying, "I can't make the coin dirtier than it was, coming from thee. Go thy ways, Master Hummall; and be sure thy wife will take her last leave of thee at the gallows!" Having eased her mind somewhat by this

parting prediction, Tabitha slammed the door in the face of her old admirer.

"Well," murmured Hummall, too used to rebuffs to be disturbed at what had passed. "An' if I marry, there's a promise of comfort at my end, if Tab's words come true. So," he continued, apostrophizing the piece of gold, as he walked away from the house, "so thou'st turned traitor at last! I'll melt thee into small change, and drink thee to death. Chests of gold and jewels! Humph! if I know the King's Rogues, there is grist for his majesty's exchequer, and his poor servant, Rob Hummall."

Tabitha had baffled him; but when booty was to be had, Hummall would find a foil to it, if he took a month to hit it.

Tabitha had not spoken entirely "without her book," when she hinted at Walter's fitness to be Alice's suitor. A boy who frequently attended upon Walter Gray, to carry his creel and landing-hook, had found his services dispensed with, and wondering wherefore, had ventured to keep watch upon his young master. The tale he told to Tabitha was so unlikely to be true that he gained little credence from the waiting-maid.

"I'd be swoored, Mistress Tabitha, she war a young 'ooman," said the boy, "tho' she war tricked out like our wenches at Christmastide, when they goes a mumming."

"You dreamt it, boy."

"I warn't a dreaming. I seed a black man wi' 'em, and he frightened me sorely; so I run'd away," said the boy.

Tabitha was quick-witted, and rather alive to her own interest, though in the main, a faithful servant to her mistress. She resolved, therefore, to say nothing of this conversation until she had sounded her young master, and perhaps made market of her silence.

It was long past mid-day when Walter Gray returned from fishing. He walked gazing on the ground, as though wearied by his day's labour. He paused at the entrance-gate, and almost said aloud —

"How strangely fate disposes of us! — that I should be in love with this strange girl — I, who have always laughed at lovers!"

The young moraliser was at the mature age of nineteen!

"And yet," he continued, "I would forego the world, I fancy, for Alice Maybourne; and, for one smile of her sweet lips, brave all the jesters round the market-table."

There was a smack of love-sickness in the youngster's words. He called "Tabitha."

"Take in my rod and basket, please ye."

"Empty again!" said the waiting-woman, peeping into the creel. "Yesterday you had no better sport, sir."

"The fish are cunning at this season," replied Walter, rather confused.

"Dear me," said Tabitha; "would nothing take the hook? Do any fish, sir, bite at a ladybird?"

Walter felt the colour mount to his cheek at Tabitha's silly question, and he could only inquire —

"Where is my aunt?"

"In the orchard, sir," replied Tabitha. "She has been asking for you — wondering why you forego your mid-day meal so often."

"So often," exclaimed Walter; "only to-day, and yesterday."

"And the day before, sir," added Tabitha. "I told my mistress there were wild cherries in the dale, which, mayhap, you gathered."

Walter turned his eyes quickly upon Tabitha; but that clever person looked simplicity itself. Having in some way satisfied herself from Walter's confusion — that there was a little more truth in the peasant boy's story than she had at first imagined, Tabitha carried the rod and basket into the house, leaving the detected lover to follow at his leisure.

"I wish I could take heart and tell my aunt of all that has chanced," thought Walter; "I would do so, but I fear to mention the Hall and bring back her old sorrow."

Thus musing, he entered the orchard where his aunt was seated, with a lace pillow on her lap, and plying with nimble fingers the rattling bobbins.

"So, Master Truant, you are home again," said Mistress Leyton, with a smile of welcome; "the capon would have grown cold had we waited dinner for thee."

"Pardon, dear aunt," replied Walter, with slight confusion, "but my sport made me forgetful of time and dinner."

"And yet Tabitha has but now told me that you came home with an empty basket," said Mistress Leyton.

"True, aunt; but — but I was ashamed of my bad sport, and sought to amend it;" Walter coloured slightly at this mild prevarication.

"Well, I'll not catechize thee further, Walter. Go in; you have outwearied thyself, silly boy! 'tis nearly sunset."

Walter gladly accepted his dismissal, and went into the house.

"Walter is ill at ease," thought Mistress Leyton. "Yet what disturbs him I cannot guess. Mayhap, he grows weary of a country life and wants to see the town. 'Tis natural that he should do so, and I'll speak to him to-night."

The shades of evening deepened, and Tabitha, mindful of her mistress, had brought her a hood.

"Thanks, good girl," said Mistress Leyton, "I will go in;" but as she rose to do so, a wretched-looking creature came from behind a pleached hedge which crossed the garden and fell upon his knees.

Mistress Leyton and Tabitha uttered a cry, but as the man appeared utterly prostrate, they did not move.

"He hath fainted, Tabitha; fetch him some water."

"No, no," said Reuben, for it was he, "a moment, and it will pass."

So changed was the man, that Mistress Leyton failed to recognise the voice, the features, of her deadliest enemy.

"Who art thou?" she asked, after a pause.

"A wretch to pity," replied Reuben; "black as my crime was, my punishment should be its atonement."

"What is your story — if it be one that I may hear?" asked Mistress Leyton, an undefined fear stealing upon her.

"A common one, madam," answered the man in a deep, husky voice; a "wealthy libertine betrayed the woman I loved, and to avenge her wrong I blighted the peace of one as dear to him."

"Unhappy man!" said Mistress Leyton.

"Aye, mistress, most unhappy. By forged letters and wicked lies I made a husband believe his wife unfaithful."

"Reuben Studley!" exclaimed Mistress Leyton, stepping back and clinging to Tabitha.

"Yes, madam!" cried Reuben, clasping his hands imploringly, "and my deep remorse has driven me

almost mad. Do not curse me. See what a wretch I am!"

"Begone! begone!" exclaimed Mistress Leyton, "lest I lose all Christian patience and spurn you with my foot. Stand by me, Tabitha; my blood is chilled at sight of him!"

Reuben spoke not, but continued to clasp his hands and moan.

"What hast thou not done, thou man of lies? Torn wife from husband, a mother from her child; broken up home, sown hate where only love was, and made one life at least a living hell."

Tabitha became alarmed for her mistress, fearing that her excitement might produce ill consequences. But she would not be appeased.

"How durst thou look upon me, the widowed wife that thou hast made?"

"To save one dear to you, one —"

"Peace! Let me not hear your voice! Never again approach me, or I will have you beaten from my gate."

"But for one moment hear me. Walter Gray —"

Mistress Leyton made one step towards the cringing man, and raised her clenched hand as though to strike him.

"Does not that name blister thy serpent tongue? It should do so. Begone! thou hast poisoned the air about us. Begone!"

Tabitha again interposed, and at last succeeded in leading her mistress into the house.

"She will not hear me — she will not!" muttered Reuben, covering his face with his hands, and bending his head almost to his knees. "No, though I come to put my wretched life in peril to serve her kinsman."

Reuben rose up with difficulty, — either weak from hunger, or from the scene which had just been enacted, — and staggering like a drunken man, made his way from the orchard through a little wicket which opened on to a path leading to the river.

When Mistress Leyton had somewhat recovered, Tabitha went in search of Walter, but he was nowhere to be found.

"Be in the dale at sunset."

Hated, who spoke only Spanish, although he partially understood spoken English, inquired, by gesture, of course Walter's answer. Of course Walter intimated his readiness to obey; and Hated, without either word or salutation, walked hastily away, ceasing himself from observation by keeping within the shadow of a low wall which formed the boundary of the park.

CHAPTER VII.

THE sudden disappearance of Walter is easily explained. Seated in one of the bay-windows which opened on the park, Walter had made good progress with a substantial meal, as — let poets say what they will — love rarely interferes greatly with the appetite of the young, and Walter had fasted since early morning. He suddenly became aware of the presence of Hafed at the window. Opening the lattice instantly, Walter was surprised to receive a letter, evidently despatched in haste, as it was unsecured by either wax or silk. It contained but one line —

“Be in the dale at sunset.”

Hafed, who spoke only Spanish, although he partially understood spoken English, inquired, by gesticulation, Walter's answer. Of course Walter intimated his readiness to obey; and Hafed, without either word or salutation, walked hastily away, concealing himself from observation by keeping within the shadow of a low wall which formed the boundary of the park.

Walter was at a loss to guess the cause for this unexpected summons from Alice. Had Hafed betrayed her to her father? Had some great sorrow come upon her? The reality could scarcely be more terrible than were his fears.

Taking his hat, which lay upon a chair beside him, he leaped lightly from the window and hastened to Dovedale, as the sun was already sinking behind the distant hills.

Before the lovers meet, it is necessary that we recount the events which had occupied the time since they had parted from each other, happy as the "pleasant pain" of love could make them.

When Alice and her attendant had regained the Hall, she sat down near a window which commanded a view of the Grange, as it was the time when her father usually indulged in his *siesta*. She had sat thus for some time, when, looking round, she discovered that Hafed was still standing in the room, with his hands clasped before him, and his head inclined forward, as was his manner when testifying respect.

Alice was rather surprised, and addressing him in Spanish, gently dismissed him.

"Señora, may I speak to you?" asked Hafed, in the same language.

"Surely yes, Hafed," replied Alice. "Are you not my confidant — almost my only friend?"

"If to yield up my life could prove it, I would die to do so," said Hafed.

"And so I do believe. What would you say to me?"

"Knowing my devotion — knowing that I reckon nothing of pain, sorrow, life, to do you service — you must not be angry with your slave if he speak bold words — words that he would say to no other."

"Go on, Hafed," said Alice, guessing in part what she was about to hear.

"You know, señora, from what misery, what degradation, your honoured father rescued me; how, for many years, I have been a witness to the helplessness which blindness brings. You know how he has trusted me, even to the care of his most precious treasure — you, his daughter."

Alice only answered by a movement of her head.

"Am I — am I proving faithful to my trust in what I see and know? Do I not deceive the blind confiding master by aiding such meetings as that of to-day and yesterday, and other days?"

"Yes, Hafed," replied Alice, rising up, and holding out her hand, which Hafed, kneeling, kissed.

"Yes; we are both unfaithful to the dearest father and the kindest master; but I only am to blame. I have abused your devotion, and my father's confidence. Even now I was debating with myself how best to tell my father all that has been of late. I

have no need to doubt his love or tenderness; and yet I hesitate — somewhat because —”

“You fear, I shall have blame — perhaps reproaches. I deserve both, honoured lady; and I can bear. Speak — oh! speak at once.”

“I will,” said Alice; “I will, Hafed. There is no shame in what I have to tell. I love a worthy gentleman — of that I am assured by every word and thought he breathes. Yes, I will go at once to my father. Be not afraid, good Hafed, no harm shall come to you.”

Hafed bowed low as Alice passed by him, and in that attitude remained for some time, as though he were engaged in deep reflection — perhaps in prayer.

When he aroused himself he walked straight to the door of the room where Alice was with her father. He placed his ear close to the panelling of the door; and the deep lines which came into his face gave indication that what reached him was giving him pain. At last he heard the sound of the silver whistle, which was his master's summons to him.

When Hafed entered the room, the sightless eyes of the blind man were raised upwards, and tears were falling fast upon his long and grised beard. Kneeling at his feet, her head lying on his lap, was Alice; but her father's hands were clasped about

her head, as though she had confessed, and was forgiven.

Hafed scarcely entered the room, and then stood motionless.

In a few moments Leyton appeared to recover the command of his feelings; and turned his face towards the spot where stood his offending servant.

“Hafed,” he said, “my daughter has told me all. Thy only fault to me is forgiven. Go — keep watch in the gallery. Let no one disturb us.”

Hafed again bowed low, and, without speaking a word, left the room. He did not listen again; he knew that his beloved mistress was forgiven, and for her he only cared.

“Come, put your arms about my neck, and kiss me,” Leyton said, and was instantly obeyed. “Sit down beside me, and give me thy hand.”

Alice obeyed. “I have also a story to tell my child, and which I would have delayed until to-morrow, thy eighteenth birthday —”

“Was this my birth-place?” asked Alice, eagerly; but such deep sorrow came into her father’s face that she almost repented that she had asked the question.

“Yes,” Leyton answered, with a sigh; “and it was for that reason — and one other — which made me come back to this dishonoured house. Alice,

your first unfilial act has brought its fruit — none will know how bitter beside thyself and me.”

“Oh, no; you have forgiven me,” cried Alice, clasping her father’s neck.

Leyton paused for a few moments, and then said —

“You have often asked me of your mother —” He paused again.

“Did she die here?” Alice asked, sadly.

“Would that she had!” exclaimed Leyton, “even when our love was at the newest. No, Alice, she did not die, though she is dead to me — to you — to all that should make life dear to woman.”

“Oh, holy saints!” exclaimed Alice; “I dare not ask your meaning!”

“No; let us not give the deed its proper name,” answered Leyton, pressing the hand of Alice until the pressure gave her pain. “Enough, she left me. I was away on duty with the queen in France. I came home — came here — where I had left all the hopes and happiness of my life. Gone! gone! She had fled — but had left me you. For that one act of mercy I have forgiven her the wrong she did me.”

“Oh, father — dear, dear father!” and Alice sobbed aloud upon Leyton’s neck.

“Be calm, my child; we never speak again upon this matter. But there is more to tell,” said Leyton, with great effort.

"What? The proofs — the certainty you had of my mother's wickedness?"

"I had proofs enough: be sure of that. My state had become too poor; I was with a losing cause. A faithful servant brought me letters I could not question; I knew the man who had wronged me. He had not the boldness to deny his treachery. We fought, and he had died; but he blinded me."

Alice did not speak for some moments. She then asked, quietly —

"Did you not seek my mother?"

"No."

"Might it not have been a devilish lie coined to deceive you?" continued Alice; "or to revenge some wrong? It seems too monstrous that a wife and mother should have been bought with gold."

"I would have sworn she could not," said Leyton; "but I had such proofs —"

"I would have seen her," interrupted Alice. "I would have trusted to her love before appearances, though backed by every proof but her confession!"

"Child!"

"What if thou hast done my mother wrong, which, from the rashness with which you judged, seems more than probable? Is it now too late to do her justice?" asked Alice.

"Be silent, Alice," replied Leyton. "You speak because you love this Walter Gray."

"Indeed — indeed you wrong me!" said Alice. "If Walter Gray loves me, he will not forsake me for my mother's shame."

"Alice, you force me to the worst," replied Leyton. "You do not know how dear Walter Gray is to your mother — dearer, perhaps, than even you have been, although you were her first born."

Alice sprang to her feet, and holding back her hair with both her hands, stood as though terror-stricken. Leyton saw not this, and so continued —

"If you would seek your mother — if you would hear her tell her story — go with your Walter home. Mistress Leyton is your mother — is his."

A sickness, followed by a sense of death, and Alice fell at her father's feet.

Leyton instantly summoned Hafed.

"I have killed her — I have killed my child!" he exclaimed, stretching out his hands. "Let me touch her! Oh, she is dead!"

Hafed drew a small dagger from its sheath and held the polished blade to the lips of his young mistress for a few moments.

"No, she breathes!"

"Thank God!" exclaimed Leyton; and then, covering his face with his hands, uttered more words of thankfulness.

It was some time before Alice recovered from the swoon which had overpowered her; and when, by the assistance of a woman-servant and Hafed, she

had been conducted to her own chamber, she requested to be left alone, but desired the Moor to remain within call. She could not have defined clearly her reason for making this request, but Hafed was associated in her still confused brain with Walter Gray, and to him all her bewildered thoughts were directed as to a point where she was to find either wreck or rescue.

The terrible doubt of her mother's guilt — she refused to accept her father's condemnation as proof of it — made it imperative upon her to forego, and at once, all further interviews with Walter; but she could not part from him without some explanation — she could not endure the thought that he would believe her fickle and changeable, or permit him to imagine that he had given her cause of offence.

After a time she saw the way to acquaint him with this painful termination to their short, sweet dream of love, but the shock she had just sustained prevented its immediate accomplishment. She had therefore written the one brief line which Hafed had conveyed to Walter.

The sun had set, and the young moon shone brightly over the dale of the Dove. The grey rocks, which rose like rugged walls on either side of the meandering river, picturesque at all times, now resembled some place in gnome-land, where silver held the place of stone, and every dewy leaf seemed to have a diamond covering. The gurgling water,

foaming around the boulders and rugged stones which impeded its course, seemed also like liquid silver, except when it flowed past the shadows of projecting rocks and overhanging trees.

Walter leant against a large boulder on the edge of the stream, his eyes fixed upon the fissure in the rock, and which Alice had forbidden him to enter.

He was doomed to a long watch, as Alice had tried again and again to write what she desired to say to him, and at last only succeeded in producing a confused letter. Any other than a lover would have grown weary of his vigil, but Walter continued at his post until, by the course of the moon, he judged it to be nearly nine o'clock. His patience was to be rewarded, as a dim light shone in the opening in the rock, and presently the figure of the Moor stood out boldly in the moonlight. Walter made his presence known, and then Hafed, gliding like a cat among the loose rocks which lay scattered between them, descended to where Walter was standing, and gave him a letter which Alice had written. The Moor scarcely made any salutation, either on his approach or when he departed, and Walter was too much interested in the missive he had received to heed the messenger.

By the light of the moon Walter read as follows —

“DEAR WALTER GRAY, — I would not lay aside

my maiden modesty and so address thee, did I not know that I shall never see thee more — unless what I dare still to hope may prove to be the truth, and then I should be too happy to have made known my love for thee.

“I left thee this morning, Walter, without the consciousness of a sorrow; I write to thee steeped to my lips in misery. I have tried again and again to tell you whence this change has come, but the words, as I wrote them, seemed to turn to fire and blinded me. Walter, it is a sin to love as we have loved; but if a time should come when we may meet — I know not what I write — farewell!

“Farewell! A thousand words could not express more grief than that one — farewell! Keep the poor gift I send thee, for the sake of your most unhappy

“ALICE.”

Walter had read the letter twice before he looked for Hafed to deliver the love-token it mentioned, but the Moor had disappeared, and the light from the fissure also.

Walter was about to go in the pursuit of Hafed, when he heard a voice call —

“Master Gray!”

Walter turned instantly, and was surprised to see a man — it was Robin Hummall — coming towards him.

Walter was in no humour to submit to an impertinence, and therefore he advanced to meet Hummall, saying —

“Who are you, sir, that presumes to watch me?”

“Master Walter Gray, I am a man of peace,” replied Hummall, with a nasal drawl.

“Thou art a prying knave,” said Walter, “and it would be doing an act of right to cudgel thee for thy impertinence.”

“Nay, Master Gray,” answered Hummall, in his natural tone, “I have not borne sickness by sea, and hunger by land, to be paid with a cudgel for bringing thee the king’s message.”

“The king’s message!” said Walter, with surprise. “What jest is this?”

“No jest, sir,” replied Hummall; “the king hath heard of thee as a likely young cock to fight in a battle royal.”

“Indeed, sir?”

“You doubt me!” replied Hummall. “All I ask of thee is, that you will meet some of the best men in this country within half an hour at Graseby Farmhouse, ruin as it is, and you will give me credit for being less of a saint than I look.”

Walter made no reply, but he thought, poor lover! — “If Alice be lost to me, any enterprise, however dangerous, will be welcome.”

"Come, sir," said Hummall, laying his hand lightly on Walter's shoulder, "don't let the pouting of a pretty wench make you suck in your cheeks like a blacksmith's bellows."

Walter turned round sharply, as though he resented Hummall's familiarity; but that worthy was not easily abashed, and he continued —

"Ah! that's the look for me. You'd stare misfortune out of countenance. Come, Master Gray, let us shake hands on this matter, and be friends."

"I must know more of thee before I cry 'yes' to that bargain," said Walter. "And is not that a man standing in the shadow of the Pike Rock?"

"Possibly," replied Hummall. "I have overstayed my appointment, and my friends may have come here to seek me."

Hummall then placed his fingers to his lips and blew a loud, shrill whistle. It was instantly answered, and some four or five men discovered themselves, to the surprise and pardonable alarm of Walter.

"We thought evil had come to thee, Robin," said Boardwine, "as Cocktail here reported you had entered the dale an hour before sunset."

"You are honest fellows, *camaradoes*, and I thank ye for the care of me," replied Hummall; "but I have been recruiting for the king's service, I trust. Master Walter Gray —"

"Robin! Robin!" said Boardwine, drawing Hummall aside, "that's my pretty little sheep, Robin; if

thou hast sheared him, I'll have my half of the fleece."

"When did I wrong to a brother?" replied Hummall, in an undertone. "And now, Master Gray, these are the friends I told thee of — all deep in the king's confidence, and earnest workers in the king's cause — so much so that Crop-ears and Roundheads and other disloyal folk call us 'The King's Rogues.'"

"The King's Rogues!" repeated Walter, not favourably impressed by the appearance of the group.

"Yes, Master Gray," said Hummall, "and we are proud to be so distinguished. As we are to be friends, I hope, let me be plain with thee. As your privateers at sea, so we on land confiscate for the good of the king and the country — we being the country."

Walter remained silent.

"Now, these gentlemen and myself have heard that in Leyton Hall lie certain chests or caskets brimming with gold and jewels," said Hummall. "It would make too much stir to force admittance to this El Dorado, Master Gray; but as thou hast knowledge of the way to come and go quietly to this treasury which we claim in the king's name, we desire thy companionship."

"And dare you ask me to take part in such a robbery?" asked Walter, indignantly.

"No players' speeches, Master Gray," replied Hummall, insolently. "Are you with us?"

"No! a thousand times no!" exclaimed Walter.

The words were scarcely uttered when, at a signal from Hummall, Walter's head was covered with a cloak, his limbs strapped together, and in this powerless condition he was conscious of being borne away he knew not whither.

The gift for Walter which Alice had confided to Hafed was her miniature — one of those masterpieces of art, of which some examples have come down to us. The Moor, whose love for his mistress was only equalled by his jealousy of Walter, had learned from Alice that she and her lover were never likely to meet again; and as he looked upon the counterfeit face of the one he loved, he resolved to retain the picture. He had not, however, reached the Hall, before his better nature chided him for his unfaithfulness, and hurrying back he had hoped to have given the miniature to Walter. He arrived, however, only in time to witness the act of violence committed by the King's Rogues. Hafed's blood was roused by what he had seen, and he resolved to follow the assailants of Walter, and, if possible, effect his rescue.

As Hafed stole along, availing himself of every projecting rock or bush for the purpose of concealment, he came suddenly upon a man who was ap-

parently engaged also in watching the retreating Rogues. Hafed was quickly on his defence, but the man he had surprised explained by action and a few plain words, which Hafed appeared to understand, that he had Walter's safety in view. This man was Reuben, and Hafed could not have met with a more determined helper.

The fellows who had seized Walter carried him with little difficulty to the dismantled farm-house where we first met them, and having reached the room usually appropriated to their meetings, the cloak was removed from Walter's head, and his limbs were unbound.

"You must pardon our rough courtesy, Master Gray," said Hummall, "but time presses, and we have much work to do before the morning."

"The gentleman cannot complain of his bearers," remarked Cocktail; "we carried him as tenderly as though he had been a babe in his long-coats. Our care is surely worth a bottle or two of double ale—eh, Master Gray?"

"Now that I know your honourable calling," said Walter, "I were a fool to hesitate. My purse, sir;" and he threw a leathern pouch containing a few pieces of money on the table.

The chink of the coin sounded like music to his captors, and more than one hand was extended to secure the bag. Boardwine, however, with the quickness of a hawk, threw himself upon the prize, exclaiming—

"Fie, gentlemen, fie! would you rob the exchequer?"

"Cease scrambling for such a petty quarry: you shall stoop to-night at true game," said Hummall; and then, turning to Walter, he continued, "How say ye, Master Gray; are you willing to do us the slight service we have need of from you? Show us the secret way to Leyton Hall?"

"You have had my answer," replied Walter.

"Then, gentlemen, we will trust to pick and crowbar. In the meantime, Master Gray, we will care for your safety until we can secure you a voyage to Holland."

"To Holland!" exclaimed Walter, alarmed for the first time.

"Ay, sir — a rare place, where the land's half water and the men all breeches," said Hummall, with a coarse laugh.

"You will not commit such violence?"

"Yes; as the King's Rogues, we can afford to be liberal," said Hummall. "Common knaves would tighten your neckband or open an artery: we send you to see the world gratis."

"You are bold villains!" said Walter.

"You flatter us," replied Hummall, with a bow. "Gentlemen, you will show Master Gray to the only spare chamber in this poor dwelling, and I will send you presently the best out of Zedekiah's cellar."

A lusty cheer was the answer to this address;

and as soon as Hummall had left, Walter saw to his dismay that the spare chamber was beneath the floor of the room where he was, and that access to it was by a trap in the floor.

Walter felt that remonstrance would be vain; and scorning to show a white feather, he descended the steps when required to do so without a word, and then found himself in total darkness.

The villanous scheme which Hummall had concocted for robbing Leyton Hall had nearly been frustrated, for to his horror he found, on arriving at Waterwell's alehouse, that a party of mounted soldiers had halted there, and were likely to remain for the night.

Hummall instantly assumed his best Puritanical manner and boldly mixed with the soldiers, saluting the cornet who commanded them.

"You march late, friend, dost thou not?" asked Hummall, carelessly.

"Yea," replied the cornet; "we had hoped to have reached Castleton to-night, but we missed the road. We are in pursuit of a band of desperadoes, of whom thou mayst have heard — the King's Rogues, as they are called."

"I have heard of the knaves," replied Robin. "Hath not the Council put a price upon their heads?"

"Yes," answered the cornet; "a hundred pound."

"For the lump?" asked Hummall.

The cornet bowed affirmatively.

"And you will abide the danger of the capture?"

"Assuredly," replied the cornet.

"Then I will as assuredly deliver them into thy hands."

"When?"

"At mid-day to-morrow, if the gold-finches of the Council do sing in their cage," said Hummall, holding open the pocket of his doublet.

"Fear not for your reward, man," replied the cornet. "Where shall we meet?"

"Continue thy rout to Castleton," said Hummall.

"There is a hostelry called 'The Miners,' where I will join thee at daybreak. To remain here would alarm the country; so keep a still tongue, and ride forward."

The cornet soon marshalled his little troop, and acting in conformity with certain instructions given by Hummall, the march to Castleton was resumed.

Master Robin Hummall fairly laughed aloud when the last trooper rode from the door, and having ordered the liquor for his comrades, and a bottle of ale for his own drinking, he filled a small silver pipe with a pinch or two of real Trinidado, and smoked as though it were a calumet of peace.

"Ha!" thought Hummall, as he blew a wreath of smoke from between his lips, "this is picking pockets with both hands. He will march his men

out of our way until I and my fellows have done our *devoirs* at Leyton Hall, and then my worthy friends, my King's Rogues, look to your necks. The Parliament gibbets will silence your scandals of *cavaliero* Robin, and put a cool hundred into his pocket." And so the cold-blooded knave smoked and ruminated.

Reuben and Hafed had seen all that had transpired between Walter and his captors, and had devised the best means which presented themselves for the deliverance of Walter Gray. Reuben knew how much the neighbouring peasants stood in fear of the desperate ruffians who had done the recent violence, and also how disinclined any would be to serve a cause which had his advocacy. Even Mistress Leyton would not permit him to approach her; but Providence had sent Hafed to aid in the rescue of Walter Gray.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE unusual and continued absence of Walter occasioned considerable surprise and alarm to his aunt, who had been greatly disturbed also by her interview with Reuben.

"There is a bright moon," said Mistress Leyton to Tabitha, "and the boy knows every yard of ground, I have heard him say, for miles around."

"There is no fear of harm to Master Walter, madam," replied Tabitha, "not more than many a youth hath encountered and come off scathless."

"What mean you, Tabitha?" asked the mistress.

Tabitha then repeated to her mistress all that she had heard from the boy, and also illustrated the narrative by describing how she had set word-traps to catch Master Walter's secret, if he had one. Tabitha pronounced that there was a lady in the case.

Mistress Leyton was puzzled and vexed. Who was this stranger who had become possessed, by the injustice of the times, of her husband's ancestral home? — who this girl, if indeed there were any cause for Tabitha's surmises? Her waiting-maid, she knew, was rather experienced in such matters, being,

as Jacob Magnus had once described her, "a chicken of a forward hatch;" and it was the privilege of her class to know more of the secrets of a family than the head of it ever suspected.

"The youth is flesh and blood, madam," said Tabitha, "and thou wouldst not have him of ice or marble. If what Dickson says be true, and he kissed the maiden's hand at parting, be sure he will not rest until he hath tried the flavour of her lips."

"Tabitha," replied Mistress Leyton, "you are somewhat free spoken, and — gracious! was not there a noise at the window?"

Tabitha, after a moment's hesitation, withdrew the curtain, and then cried out, evidently greatly alarmed.

"What ails thee, girl?" asked Mistress Leyton.

"There is a black, evil-looking man — though, now I remember, such a one is said to be at the Hall," said Tabitha.

Mistress Leyton withdrew the curtain which Tabitha had closed again, and saw Hafed, who now tapped loudly at the window.

"Admit the man instantly," said Mistress Leyton; "doubtless he brings some news of Walter."

Tabitha would have delegated this duty to David, the man-servant, had not her curiosity overcome her fears; and opening the house door, she beckoned Hafed to follow her to her mistress.

The light of a large wax taper fell full on the face of Mistress Leyton as Hafed entered, and when he saw the still comely features of the lady, he started with evident surprise. He did not reflect upon the cause, but instantly endeavoured to convey the purport of his visit. As we have said, the Moor could understand the meaning of many English words, but could pronounce only a very few, and those with great difficulty.

"What are you seeking here at this hour?" asked Mistress Leyton. "Are you from the Hall?"

Hafed was greatly excited by his inability to convey what he desired to make known; until pointing to a portrait of Walter and reiterating his name, gesticulating and working his expressive features, he contrived to inform Mistress Leyton that Walter was in danger.

Tabitha immediately summoned the serving-man, but could hardly speak for terror. David, having served in the king's army until the fatal day at Worcester, was always ready for a fray if one came in his way. He instantly divined that hard knocks were needed somewhere, and hastening to the home-stead adjoining the garden, he blew on a great cow's-horn a lusty blast, and aroused three or four farming men, much to their especial wonder.

"Bring thee flails and thee pitchforks, lads, Master Walter is in trouble. Stir thee, lads, stir thee," and in a few minutes David, armed with tuck and

petronel, had marshalled his irregulars and was ready to march.

Hafed, who rarely carried other weapon than the dagger at his girdle, was also armed with a short sword belonging to Walter. Before he left the room he placed in Tabitha's hand the miniature of his young mistress, and, pointing to the portrait of Walter, made the quickwitted waiting-maid understand that "the counterfeit presentment" was to be given to her young master when he returned.

When the men had departed and Mistress Leyton had recovered somewhat from the alarm and excitement occasioned by Hafed's communication, Tabitha mentioned the charge she had received from Hafed.

"Here is the painting——" but Tabitha paused, struck by the wonderful resemblance of the miniature to her mistress.

"Why do you stare so, girl?" asked Mistress Leyton; "give me the painting."

Tabitha obeyed; but no sooner had Mistress Leyton scanned the features than she uttered a loud cry, pressing her hand upon her forehead, as though some great overwhelming thought oppressed her brain.

"What is this!" she cried at length. "This face——it must be——here, girl, unclasp my neck-brooch?"

Mistress Leyton then took from her bosom the

miniature of a child, and held it by the side of the one she had received from Tabitha.

"I cannot be deceived — I am sure I cannot! These are the features of my child; each infant beauty ripened by womanhood. Did he say her name?"

"No, madam!" replied Tabitha, wondering at what she saw.

"But why do I ask a name?" exclaimed Mistress Leyton, kissing the portrait; "as though my love could be deceived; those eyes have looked upon me in my dreams — those lips kissed mine! Could they speak they would call me mother!"

Poor Lady! she could endure bravely no longer, but yielding to her woman's weakness, wept convulsively. Tabitha had had many sad experiences of her mistress's sudden attacks of acute suffering, and knowing that they must have their way, she let her weep unquestioned.

"To-morrow — to-morrow," Mistress Leyton said, "I will know the truth or falsehood of my surmise. I will to bed now, Tabitha — you shall wait the return of Walter. To-morrow I will go to Leyton Hall;" but to-morrow came and she was helpless to move or think. She was ill — very ill.

Hafed in the meantime led the little party, bent upon relieving Walter Gray, but it was nearly midnight before Graseby Farmhouse was reached. The place was in perfect darkness, except where the

moonlight stole through the casements and dilapidated roof. In the room where the desperadoes usually assembled there was still a few embers smouldering on the hearth, and as the apartment was used for "parlour, kitchen, and hall," there was the aroma of some savoury mess mingling with the odour of tobacco.

On the table among the *débris* of a coarse meal and drinking bout, was the remains of a large candle of tallow, such as were made by peasant women for domestic use. This was soon lighted, but no trace of Walter could be found. Hafeed at last commenced searching the floor, and his quick eye soon detected the trap-door leading to the cellar, and upon which a heavy table had been placed.

"Young master's prison, I'd be sworn," said David. "Quick, lads. Shove away the table and up with the trap."

David then called aloud Walter's name, and was rejoiced to hear his young master reply:

"Hillo! David. I'm here in limbo, bound hand and foot, and nearly starved with cold and hunger."

The fellows by whom Walter had been kidnapped had taken effectual means to keep him prisoner, as his hands and feet were strapped together so artistically that there could be no doubt but the operator had had much personal experience.

Walter was much surprised to see Hafeed among

his liberators, but there was no time to waste in inquiries or conjectures.

Walter had gathered from what he had overheard, that the King's Rogues meditated an attack upon Leyton Hall, and that they must by this hour be at their dishonest work. David therefore knocked up some five or six persons, to whom he was known in the adjacent village; but such was the terror inspired by the King's Rogues, that before the relieving party was half a mile on its way most of David's new allies had deserted.

But where was Reuben?

Having satisfied himself that Hafed comprehended the danger to which Walter was exposed, and that the Moor could make himself intelligible to Walter's friends at the Grange, Reuben had started off in pursuit of the troopers, then on their way to Castle-ton. He knew that as the road was rough and circuitous, he might be fortunate enough to overtake them by crossing a moorland which lay between two lofty hills, which could only be traversed by one well acquainted with the almost undistinguishable track, and in this expectation he was not disappointed.

The Rogues, however, had gone straight to their work above an hour before, and would no doubt have secured their prize but from the appearance of lights moving about the Hall, until they became

stationary in the two chambers of Alice and her father.

The absence of Hafed was inexplicable to his master, who, wearied at last, laid down on his couch without undressing, and was soon asleep.

Not so Alice, she knew the business on which Hafed had been despatched, and distracted herself with a hundred wild conjectures as to the cause of his detention. Had Walter been so much disturbed by what she had written, that he had by some angry word given offence to the fiery Moor? Had ill come to Walter, and did Hafed hesitate to meet her? Or had the faithful servant fallen a victim to his devotedness to his dear mistress?

Alice could not sleep, but she had dismissed her attendant to her chamber desiring to be aroused when Hafed returned. It was near midnight when Alice heard a noise, which was not a knocking or any other appeal for admission. As she listened, she fancied she could hear the hum of many voices, and then presently there came a crash, as though one of the lower windows had been opened by violence. Alice was a brave woman, and without any further hesitation she took the lamp burning upon her table and proceeded in the direction of the noise. It was useless, she thought, to disturb her blind father, and to rouse the domestics before discovering the necessity for so doing never occurred to her.

The room whence the noise had proceeded was

the one usually occupied by her father, and therein was a large chest of oak, containing several small caskets — some clasped with steel or brass, and others merely of strong workmanship, secured by lock and key. Alice knew that more than one enclosed precious stones of great value, and that others were the depositories of bonds and deeds and similar documents.

As she approached the door she thought she heard the click of a flint and steel, as though some one were striking a light. No, she was not mistaken, and soon a strong stream of light came through the large key-hole of the door and played upon the wall opposite. The heart of Alice beat quickly, and she hesitated how to act. The door of the room she knew was locked, and the key hanging to her father's girdle. She listened at the door for a time, and heard the voices of men speaking in whispers. Now and then an angry oath reached her ear, and from the sounds which succeeded she fancied that some one was attempting to open the oak chest.

Alice was alarmed, and with all speed hastened to her father and aroused him. In a few rapid words she informed him of what she thought was in progress, and Leyton, blind as he was, resolved to know the cause of his daughter's fears.

Led by Alice, Leyton, having selected the proper key from the few which he carried, opened the

door of his treasury, and was instantly surrounded by Hummall and his burglarious fellows.

"What means this intrusion, my masters?" said Leyton. "As I hear there are many of you, your purpose, I suppose, is easily divined?"

"There are enow of us, Master Maybourne, to overset any that this house holds," replied Hummall, "and we are disposed to deal fairly with you. Nay, mistress, you need not cling to your father so closely. We are Cavaliers, and respect beauty."

"Ye are rogues and cut-throats," cried Leyton, "as you should know to your cost if I had but sight to guide my hand."

"Be not foul-lipped an' you desire to escape the gag and the strappado," said Hummall, fiercely. "Say us fairly, and we content ourselves with such loose matters as lie ready to our hands. Rouse us by ill words or threats of danger, and we know how to make still tongues, though it involve the opening of a vein or two."

"Do not provoke these men, father," said Alice. "Let them have what they seek, and begone."

"Well said, fair mistress," cried Cocktail; "and spare us the sweat and labour of forcing this d—ble piece of oak carpentry. A crow may peck at it till doomsday."

"The key of this chest, Master Maybourne," said Hummall, boldly.

Leyton replied by throwing his keys upon the floor.

"Unmannerly and foolish, sir," said Hummall; "but for old recollections, I would make fair mistress pick them up again." But Cocktail had already secured the keys, and was fitting them to the locks of the great chest.

When the lid was raised, the expectant thieves crowded round and stared with admiration at the accumulated caskets, all promising to contain a store of booty.

Alice and her father stood without speaking — almost breathless — the one from fear, the other from suppressed indignation.

What noise is that? Surely the tramp of men, unheard by the rogues, now intent on the plunder they had secured.

Leyton's quick ear caught the sound also, and, pressing Alice closely to his side, whispered — "This may be a rescue."

Scarcely had he spoken the words when Hafed, followed by Walter and a dozen or more of the troopers, rushed into the room, to the consternation of the rogues, who saw instantly that they were overmatched, and at the mercy of their captors.

"Don't fire, gentlemen — don't strike!" cried Boardwine. "There is no use alarming young mistress here, and filling the house with the smell of villanous gunpowder. There lies my weapon;" and he cast his formidable-looking sword upon the floor.

"So, Master Walter Gray," said Hummall, re-

covering from his surprise, "you would not use your knowledge for our advantage, but in return for our foolish clemency in not giving thee thy quietus, thou hast shown the way to our destruction."

"Even so, rogue," replied Walter.

"Then let me die easy," said Hummall, as he discharged a petronel aimed at the breast of Walter Gray. There was a sharp cry and a heavy fall, a piercing scream from Alice, and then, when the smoke had cleared away, stretched on the floor lay Reuben Studley.

Yes, he had seen the direction of Hummall's aim, and, regardless of his life, he had thrown himself before Walter; and the smile upon his face implied a hope that his voluntary death might be accepted as some atonement for the wrongs he had done when living.

The shot had taken effect in the neck, and though the blood flowed freely, David, who took charge of the wounded man, did not consider it to be fatal — and the old campaigner professed to have some skill in surgery.

The Parliament's troopers made short work with the King's Rogues. They strapped each of the rascals to the crupper of a horse, and in that manner set out for the town of Derby, where the rest of the regiment was lying. Spent and footsore were the rascals all when they reached the end of the journey.

There was soon a finish of these dishonest knaves. Some were sent to the Barbadoes, whilst others were draughted into the navy — a worse fate than that which had befallen their comrades, as to a man they had an unconquerable disrelish for water. Robin Hummall slipped his head out of a halter for a time by turning traitor to the king, for whom he had professed such devotion, and in whose name he had been guilty of such rogueries.

As soon as Walter was satisfied that Alice and her father were in the hands of friends, and in safety, he hastened to the Grange, knowing that his long absence must have been a source of great anxiety to his kind aunt.

There were lights burning in Mistress Leyton's room, and in that part of the building which Tabitha considered to be under her dominion.

Walter was soon heard and admitted by the drowsy waiting-woman, who — cross as drowsy people generally are — addressed Walter rather uncivilly.

“A pretty time of night, my young sir, to be abroad, alarming the whole household, and almost frightening my good mistress to death.”

“Has my aunt been so much concerned?” asked Walter.

“Of a truth has she!” said Tabitha, annoyed that her own disturbance did not seem to affect Walter one jot.

"Can I go to her?" asked Walter.

"What next will you ask?" replied Tabitha.

"My mistress needs not to be disturbed further than she has been to-night already; and now — thanks to a posset I gave her an hour ago — she sleeps, though with troubled dreams."

"I will explain all to her in the morning," said Walter, making a show of retiring.

"And why not now?" asked Tabitha; "should my mistress wake it may be she would not sleep again without knowing what has detained you abroad."

"Then call me if she does, Tabitha, and I will come to her. Good night," and Walter turned to go to his bed.

He paused at the door and asked, "Tabitha, didst thou ever hear speak of Reuben Studley?"

"Reuben Studley!" exclaimed Tabitha, in a low whisper; "that name must not be spoken in this house, or within hearing of thy aunt."

"Why so?"

"That were a story for my mistress only to confide to you, not for me," replied Tabitha. "As you value my mistress's health — and life perhaps — speak not that man's name to her."

"I will mind me of your caution, Tabitha," said Walter.

"But to me 'twere another guess sort of thing," said Tabitha; "what of him, Master Walter?"

"You shall know all anon, Tabitha. Good night," answered Walter, and left the room.

"You have lost somewhat by your silence, young sir," muttered Tabitha. "An' you had thought me worthy to have been in your secret, this pretty toy should have lain under thy pillow." Tabitha took the miniature of Alice from her pocket as she spoke, and placed it in an escritoir belonging to her mistress, and then retired to bed.

With the morning had come a slight return of Mistress Leyton's old malady, and she sat in moody silence hour by hour, and then only talked of her lost child and her cruel husband. The physician who had attended her during her former attack again proved successful, but not until many days had passed. He had made effective use of the miniature, and when Mistress Leyton became convalescent, her chief solace appeared to be the contemplation of the semblance of her child. Yes! it was her child's features that she looked upon, and Walter had confirmed her in this conviction by mentioning the name of Alice, and would have made conjecture certain by going to Leyton Hall had not Mistress Leyton forbidden him.

"No, Walter," she said; "it is I alone who should claim my daughter. I have been long parted from her, and she believes because I was unworthy to be her mother. I will go and claim my right to be acknowledged an honourable woman and a chaste

wife. When those concessions shall have been made I will demand my child. I alone can do this."

Walter could but assent to this self-vindication, as it were, but he fretted and chafed at the tardiness of his aunt's recovery, which kept him — he was sure of that — from his full acceptance as Alice's lover by her father — he was sure of that also — although he had now interrupted the happy course of their true love.

The sun shone brightly, and the wild-flowers by the way-side, and the young leaves on the hedge-boughs, had a look of peaceful thankfulness, strangely at variance with the agitating hopes and fears struggling in the brain of Mistress Leyton. Her jennet's head was towards the Hall, and her purpose was to win justice for herself, and acceptance for her nephew Walter.

Twenty years had passed since she rode a happy bride beneath the canopy formed by the stately trees which led to Leyton Hall. What joy then awaited her! Honour! — love! greeted her at every turn, and beneath yonder deserted roof she had known the crowning blessing of a woman's life when she became a mother. In those rooms, through whose dingy window-panes the sun can scarcely find its way, her darling child had made home Paradise! There she had lisped her father's name! There she had tottered from his knee to her mother's lap, and crowed with delight at the perilous achievement!

Oh, why will those memories come and make her weep, when she should be "knit up in steel," to ask for justice — to claim the compensation due to her for all the wrong and suffering she had known so undeservedly!

Could she forgive the past?

Oh, yes! if she had borne a thousand times as much, so that her forgiveness would give her back her husband's love and trust, and the companionship of her child. She always remembered Alice as a child, never associating her with the passing time; and it was not until she saw the miniature that she had thought of Alice as a matured woman — a lovely reflex of herself when she had been young and happy. And thus, as she drew nearer and nearer to the place of trial, did Maud think of Alice.

Walter with heaving bosom and trembling hand struck the huge knocker on its bolt, and every blow beat on Maud's heart. No one answered the summons. Walter knocked again and rang a great bell which hung at a postern gate in the garden wall. The clang and clatter roused the rooks nestling in the great trees, and set them cawing and whirling round. Were they giving welcome to the true mistress of Leyton Hall? Or were they scaring her away again to endure the new-old-sorrow from which she was trying to escape?

At last the door was opened by an old man, whose scarred face declared his profession had been

a perilous one, and that he bore the certificate of his deserving in his front.

"We have business with Master Maybourne," said Walter; "can we see him?"

"Not here," replied the man; "he left here more than a week ago."

"Left the Hall?" asked Walter, earnestly.

"Yea, sir; he hath gone to London, but to what part of that growing city I know not," said the man.

"He set off in much haste, and I and my dame are the only inmates, save a farming man and a boy."

Mistress Leyton would have fallen from her jennet had not David run to her assistance.

"What, ho!" cried the man. "Judith, a draught of water, quick. The lady is seized with faintness."

"Thanks, my good man!" said Maud, after she had tasted a little of the water. "And you — you know not where your master may be found, save that he has gone to London?"

"No, madam," replied the man. "I served under him and the great Prince Rupert, and being too old for service, and on the wrong side for a pension —"

"Thanks! here is a piece of silver. I will send to thee a few days hence, and if you can give me more tidings of where I may have speech of your master, I will reward thee well."

"I would I could serve thee, madam," said the old man, "but I fear me I shall know nothing more than at present; but as I hear you shall know."

Mistress Leyton and Walter turned away from the door of Leyton Hall, each with their own particular sorrow, and no word was spoken until they had reached the Grange.

"Do not go forth again to-night, Walter," said Mistress Leyton, holding up her cheek for Walter to kiss; "I want to talk with you about matters which concern us both nearly."

Walter promised to wait his aunt's pleasure; and as neither had appetite for their mid-day meal, they did not meet again until supper-time.

Mistress Leyton then told Walter what she believed to be her relationship to Alice and her father Maybourne, and of the wrong which had been done to her by Leyton's unjust suspicions, and his hasty, unjustifiable condemnation. They had learned that he and her child were within the limits of one city, and she was resolved, if she knocked at every door, to find them out.

Would Walter take his part in this discovery?

Who could doubt his answer?

As soon as this interview with Mistress Leyton was over, David, to whose charge the care of Reuben had been confided, came to Walter and told him that the man was dying, and that neither priest nor presbyter could shrive him, he had said, until he had seen Walter.

Reuben presented a much less repulsive appearance now that he had been carefully tended for a

few days. His matted locks had been combed, and his unkempt beard had been trimmed into order. There was also a solemn look of death in his face; and those who stood beside his couch felt into whose awful Presence he was about to pass. Walter knew also that what others considered to have been a deed of impulsive bravery, was a determined act of atonement for a great sin committed, whose value the merciful Judge alone could estimate at its proper worth.

Reuben requested to be left with Walter for a few minutes; and when the other persons had withdrawn from the room, he said —

“Take your tablets, sir, and write as I shall speak. The words must be few, but you will attest them, and men will believe what you say — perhaps believe me, now that I am dying.”

Walter did not hesitate to do as Reuben requested, and with great effort the dying man confessed the villany he had practised upon Leyton, and the motive he had had in doing so. He then attempted to make his cross to his signature which Walter had written, but the pen fell from his fingers; and murmuring “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them,” Reuben Studley died.

CHAPTER IX.

THE abdication of Richard Cromwell gave renewed hopes to the Royalists; and General Monk, after a perplexing reticence, having declared for the restoration of the king, Charles and the Dukes of Gloucester and Kent landed at Dover, and, amidst the noisiest acclamations and the most frantic demonstrations of loyalty, made their way to London. The streets were strewed with flowers, and the houses decorated with banners, streamers, and tapestries. The conduits flowed with wine, and the Lord Mayor and Corporation, dressed out in all the splendour of the civic court, met the king. And so on to Whitehall, until the royal ears must have been deafened by the braying of trumpets and the shouting of the loyal citizens. No wonder that Charles, it is chronicled, said it had been clearly his own fault that he had remained so long in exile. "The king had got his own again," and we all know what the lessons of adversity had taught the man Charles Stuart.

The conspicuous part which Leyton had taken up to the fight at Naseby, and his marked recognition by the king and the gallant Prince Rupert, had

rendered him very popular with the cavaliers, who did not fail to make his presence in London known to Rupert, who had lost sight of the comrade that had fought by his side through many a bloody day. Rupert had been apprized of Leyton's loss of sight at the time of its occurrence, and the misfortune excited the strongest sympathy in the breast of the gallant prince.

Leyton was sent for to Court at Rupert's instigation, and was most graciously received, but it was at the prince's lodgings in Whitehall that the blind cavalier had the greatest honour and influence. Many of the losing faction, who feared to suffer the consequences of their adherence to the Commonwealth, sought the good offices of Leyton — a blind Poet among the number — and he had thus the satisfaction of returning many of the obligations which he had incurred to those who had served him when the sun was shining on the other side of the way. Leyton had therefore, after a time, to discard his assumed name of Maybourne, and again take part in the discharge of active duties which he had thought he had abandoned for ever.

The gratification which Leyton experienced from the restoration of the king, and the triumph of that cause for which he had endured so much, was sadly alloyed by his domestic sorrows. To the loss of sight he had been long resigned, and his grief at what he believed the cruel abandonment of his wife

had yielded greatly to the assuaging influences of time, until recent events had renewed it in all its poignancy. It was even increased by a consciousness that Alice was a participator in his shame and sorrow, and of this he was made painfully aware by her altered manner and the absence of that cheerfulness which had often imparted its sunshine to his clouded mind.

With mutual consideration for each other, they had rarely spoken of the occurrences at the Hall, as Leyton could not disguise from himself the conviction that Alice did not coincide with him in the condemnation of her mother, and appeared to believe that he had too readily accepted the accusations of her detractors as proofs of her guilt. This conviction at times made him question the justness of his own conduct, and almost disposed him to institute new inquiries, the more so as Providence had brought them so strangely again together. But the settled belief of years could not be readily disturbed, and he dismissed the doubts which arose in his mind as the weak suggestions of the love he had borne to Maud, and which would not die out.

The very striking change in Alice's appearance — the cheeks which grew paler day by day — the eyes which so often gave evidence of some hidden sorrow — could not fail to attract the attention of those who, either from gratitude or sympathy, gathered about Leyton, seeking to alleviate the soli-

tude of the blind man. At last Leyton heard from their lips of the existence of a change which he had long suspected and almost seen with the eyes of paternal love. He alone knew the cause, and how difficult it was of remedy.

"Time works wonders," however, and we must be content to wait patiently, and note the running of the sand in the old magician's glass.

The disappointment which Mistress Leyton had experienced by the departure of the inmates of the Hall was great indeed; but she was so satisfied that her daughter and her husband were within reach of discovery, that the new difficulties which interposed made her only more resolute and brave. She determined to go at once to London, and by the help of such friends as still remained to her, endeavour to procure for herself that justice which had been denied so long, and effect her restoration to the honourable position of wife and mother, which she had never forfeited.

Walter was rejoiced to learn this determination on the part of his aunt. He strengthened it by the revelation of what had taken place between himself and Reuben Studley, and of which he had hitherto kept Mistress Leyton in ignorance, at the earnest solicitation of Tabitha, who feared to provoke the return of the distressing malady which seemed to be attendant on any mention of those perfidious scandals which had destroyed the happiness of Mistress Ley-

ton's life. To Walter's gratification, however, the communication he had made to his aunt produced the most satisfactory results, as the fortuitous circumstances which had combined to bring the long-estranged together, and to wring from the wretched traducer a confession of his villany, inspired Mistress Leyton with a confidence that the truth was about to be acknowledged; and the strong excitement which had recently possessed her changed to a steadfast patience, which promised to render the work she had before her more certain of accomplishment.

The journey to London having been made, Walter, under the directions of his aunt, endeavoured to find out certain of the friends to whom the Leytons had been known in former years, but by whom they were doubtlessly forgotten, or remembered only to her disadvantage.

Time, indeed, had worked many changes, even in the old City itself. Houses had changed tenants, who had gone away and left no trace of their whereabouts. New streets or clusters of houses had sprung up where green fields had been a few short years before. The population, despite the ravages of civil war, had increased and multiplied, and Walter was many days before he could gain any tidings of those whom he sought. Indeed, it was not until Tabitha had suggested the probability of her uncle Magnus being still alive — she had heard nothing of him

for some years — and that she should accompany Walter on a visit to the Mermaid, that a clue was obtained to the family of the Newberrys, the oldest friends of Mistress Leyton.

It was nearly mid-day when Walter Gray and Tabitha left their lodging in Chancery-lane to make their visit to the Mermaid. As they passed down Fleet-street, the impudent apprentices, standing at the doors of their masters' booths to solicit custom, did not fail to exercise their Cockney wit on them, as it must be confessed there was a rustical cut about Walter; and Tabitha, though London born, had lived so long in Derbyshire, that she had lost all trace of her City breeding.

"What do ye lack, gentles?" was the cry, as they passed on. "Napery for house-keeping, my noble bridegroom!" "Or," quoth another, "a gold ring that will wear out two husbands, and St. Bridget's is over the way, my pretty one." Neither Walter nor Tabitha heeded these gibes, but smiled and passed on until they came to the conduit which stood opposite Shoe-lane, and about which a small crowd was gathered, watching the angels placed on it to strike the hour of noon upon bells of brass.

Walter and Tabitha stopped also, and without knowing the cause of the crowd.

"What are the people looking at, master?" asked

Walter of an elderly man, who seemed to be an artisan by his dress.

"The angels are going to strike the hour presently," answered the man. "It's worth the staying for; an' you have not seen it, sir?"

"I have not," observed Walter.

"From the country, then, as I guess?" said the man. "You should not miss the sight, young master, as there is no such mechanical piece in the world as our conduit. See, the first angel raises his hammer!" and as the man ceased speaking the figures struck upon the bells, and made solemn music, ending with twelve beats, to mark the meridian of the day.

Walter turned to thank the man who had so kindly directed his attention to this wonder of Fleet-street, but he was gone.

"Hast thou lost thy purse, master?" said a spurrier's 'prentice, running up to Walter from the opposite side of the street. "An' thou hast, the foist has gone down Shoe-lane."

"By my troth," exclaimed Walter, surprised, "but my leathern bag is gone!"

"I thought as much," said the 'prentice. "The man that stood beside thee is old Crookfinger, the most notorious setter, barnacle, and foist in the City."

"Then why did not you warn me sooner, master 'prentice?" asked Walter.

"And leave my master's wares to be filched by some of the rogues always at hand when the conduit's striking? I were as green as thou art, Master Cowmeadow, an' I did," replied the saucy lad, walking coolly away, and resuming his lusty calling of "What do ye lack? what do ye lack? Rupert-bits for runaways — sharp rowels for good horsemen — blunt jinglers for foot gentlemen! What do ye lack?"

"An' art sure thy purse is gone, Master Walter?" asked Tabitha, who had been favourably impressed by the honest look of the seeming artisan.

"No doubt on't. Let us walk on, or some of those malaperts will be gibing us. I see yon spurrier's lad is making merry, at my cost, with his neighbour, the cordwainer. What called he the fellow who robbed me?" asked Walter, walking towards Ludgate-hill.

"A barnacle, methinks, and a foist," replied Tabitha. "They be cant names for such thieves."

"Cant names?" said Walter.

"It was called, I remember, Pedlar's French; but why I know not," replied Tabitha, who had learned much from her whilom sweetheart, Robin Hummall.

They had passed through Ludgate, and were both gazing with admiration at the lofty spire of St. Paul's, and the vast edifice which had outlived so many ages — soon, alas! to be consumed, with all

its memorials of the past, in the Great Fire which laid London in ashes.

"Halves! fair halves!" cried a man, making a dash at something lying on the footway, and close at the feet of Walter. "I don't know what luck has sent us," said the man, looking Walter full in the face, and smiling as he unrolled a small paper packet, which he had just picked up. "Be it great or small, thou shalt have thy share. Honest Joe, as men call me, never wronged man, woman, or child; and — as I live by breath, it's a ring — a gold ring set about by precious stones! What call they these?" and the man held the ring to Walter.

"They are called emeralds, if they be true stones," answered Walter.

"Emeralds, agad! and stones of price!" said Honest Joe to himself, rather than to Walter. "Of what service are such baubles to me — a hardworking Fellowship porter? My mates would only laugh at me did I wear such a gewgaw, master. A pretty piece of work, is't not, mistress?"

Tabitha could only reply in the affirmative.

"It be a lady's ring, I take it," said Honest Joe; "and would fit such a finger as thine, mistress. I know not the worth of the ring, but 'tis thine freely for twenty shillings."

Walter shook his head, saying, "I would that I could buy so good a bargain; but a barnacle — a

foist, I think you call him — hath eased me of my purse."

"Oh!" said Honest Joe, taking back his ring. "So, clapper-clawed already? I trust by a ben cull of my ken. Turn thy pockets inside out, master; and save honest men from wasting their time upon thee. Shouldst be in Kent-street, or the Mint, Master Greenhorn, ask for Honest Joe; I shall be main glad to see thee." And the fellow, laying his finger on the side of his nose, crossed the street, and took one of the lanes leading to the river.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Tabitha. "I do believe, Master Walter, we have had another escape from plunder. I mind me to have heard of such fellows. They are called ring-droppers; and had you bought his share you would have found the ring worthless glass and base metal."

"I mistrusted the knave from the first," replied Walter, somewhat piqued at Tabitha's remark. "I should not have parted with my money so readily. I would not have bought the ring but under a goldsmith's advice."

Tabitha was silent, as she was conscious of an inclination which she had felt to have taken the bait had the angler had a little more patience.

Tabitha and her young master soon reached Bread-street after this escape from the dummerer (as he was called in Pedlar's French); and, to the waiting-woman's delight, the old picture of the Mermaid

swung in its accustomed place, and still bore the name of Jacob Magnus. Yes, Jacob still kept house in Bread-street; and it said much for the strength of his constitution that he continued "to froth and lime" in the old hostel, and had not succumbed to the effects of his habitual intemperance and gross feeding.

Jacob was now about sixty-six, with a white beard, and something of a round belly. His bleared eyes and bloated face attested to the sensuality of his life; but many who had prophesied that Jacob was drinking himself to death had long since taken their last draught at the Mermaid; and were reposing in the neighbouring burial-ground of Bow. The seasoned toper had a long list of these prophets at his tongue's end; and often indulged in scornful laughter at the untimely taking-off of his old neighbours, who had been small drinkers. Mine host of the Mermaid had not escaped scot free from the troubles of the unsettled times which had passed since last we met him. Towards the close of Cromwell's life more than one plot had been discovered for the assassination of the Protector. Jacob had nearly realized his former homicidal supposition, and swung on his own sign-iron, as, when a conspiracy had been formed by certain wild apprentices, and other rash persons, to kill the Protector, fire houses, and slaughter Roundheads, they had, unknown to Jacob, made the Mermaid their head-quarters. But

Jacob had friends among the crop-ears of the City: some of whom not unfrequently were indebted to his Rhenish wine for a cheerful countenance and unsteady legs. Fearing possibly that Jacob might "peach" of their irregularities, or, perhaps, grateful for the good wine which had cheered their hearts, many of his neighbours readily endorsed his "supplication," and bore witness to his habitual abstinence from all political partisanship. Jacob, after a week's incarceration in the Fleet, was therefore permitted to return home, and again handle spigot. No man, it hath been said, but has some good in him; and Jacob, though a selfish sot, did not forget those who had stood by him in his peril. When, at the Restoration, the sudden loyalty of some of the citizens became excessively demonstrative, and would have laid hands on the goods and chattels, and personal liberty, of their more consistent neighbours, Jacob stood by them; and by using such influence as he possessed, with some of his Cavalier customers, managed to keep his old friends in whole skins, and in quiet enjoyment of their worldly possessions.

Magnus was seated in a little room at the back of the tavern, compounding his morning draught of cock-my-cap (our toppers of that day had as many names for their potations as are now found in a Yankee bar-room), and was not in the best humour at being disturbed "at his devotions," as he called his employment; but Tabitha, who had followed the

tapster, was already in the room before Jacob could frame an excuse for a denial to his visitors.

"This is somewhat against the rule of the house," said Jacob. "This is my private sanctorum, and not a reception-room for unknown customers."

"But we are neither customers nor are we unknown to each other," replied Tabitha; "an' thou wilt look at me."

"I could have sworn that I had heard that voice for the last time, five years ago, when Mistress Magnus run off the lees and made a morning's work for old Job Pickheart the sexton."

"An' hast thou forgotten me? Or is it that thy sight fails thee for want of thy morning glass?" asked Tabitha.

"Thou art comely," replied Jacob, "and hast a smack of what my Jane was at thine age — yet — By this light but it is so! Thou art such a woman as my niece Tabitha should have grown to."

"Thou hast guessed it, uncle," answered Tabitha; "I am Tabitha whom thou hast forgotten these fifteen years."

"Not so! Not so by every saint worth swearing by!" exclaimed Jacob. "Give me a buss as I give thee welcome — heartily, and like a true kinswoman."

Tabitha obeyed her uncle, and the smack of the kiss sounded like the crack of a carter's whip.

Walter had remained standing during the pre-

ceding colloquy, unnoticed by Jacob, but having established relationship with his niece, Jacob deigned to notice her companion.

"I give you good day, sir," said Jacob, resuming the compounding of his morning draught. "Be seated, sir, prithee; I know not what liquor you affect of a morning, but you have only to give it a name. I would invite thee to a share of my brewage, but it is only fitted for a seasoned brain like mine own. What wilt have, sir? Canary, Muscadel, Malmsey, or Hungary water?"

Walter chose Canary, as his morning's walk and its adventures had made a glass of wine acceptable.

"And now, Tabitha," said Magnus, when his own draught and Walter's had been placed on the table; "where hast been all these long years. Art married? and is this goodly youth thy husband or thy son?"

"Neither one nor t'other," replied Tabitha, colouring slightly, "but my young master, Master Walter Gray."

"Master Gray, I give you welcome," said Magnus, bowing respectfully; "although thy name is not familiar to me."

"Possibly that of my aunt may serve for my introduction, Mistress Leyton," replied Walter.

"Mistress Leyton! of course, I remember. An' hast thou never changed service, Tabitha?" asked Jacob; "thou didst not give promise of such con-

stancy," adding, with a leer, "seeing how thou didst jilt that babe of grace, Thomas Handy."

Tabitha laughed as she replied, "Thomas was a good lad, I doubt not, but he came to tag his love speeches with scraps from conventicle sermons, and so I bade him good morrow. As for my long service, more thanks for that to my dear good mistress than to my own merits."

"Thou hast deserved all the kindness ever shown to thee, Tabitha, for thy devotion to one who was so vilely belied and so sorely stricken," replied Walter. "Be assured, Master Magnus, a most faithful friend hath thy niece been to my poor aunt."

"By George! I am glad to hear thy praises so well sung, Tabitha; thou camest of a good strain that never forsook friend or fled foe, and I am glad thou hast sought me out. It may not be the worse for thee, when other than malt-worms are busy with this old runlet; here's health to thee, Master Gray, and to thee, niece Tabitha," and Jacob took a deep draught of the contents of his tankard, as though to drown the unpleasant thought of the churchyard which he had conjured up.

"Now tell me what is the meaning of this visit; for though I may hope thy love for thine old uncle brought thee, Tabitha, to the Mermaid, I must opine Master Gray had other business with me?"

"You judge rightly, Master Magnus," replied

Walter; "and I will be brief in the telling of it. You no doubt remember the unhappy story of my aunt's desertion by her husband, Master Leyton."

"I have need to remember Master Leyton," said Jacob, "seeing that the ward leet nearly pulled down my sign for a brawl he made here, and in which blood was made to flow to my great scandal."

"You remember the cause of that brawl?" said Walter.

— "Not clearly; I know 'twas about a woman, as most of our misadventures are," replied Jacob, laughing.

"It was no laughing matter, uncle," said Tabitha; "believe my word for that. The miserable boasting and saucy writing of a vain libertine drove Master Leyton beside his wits, and he believed the truest, lovingest wife that ever man had to be a wanton."

"Was't so?" asked Jacob, opening his eyes, and staring rather vacantly.

"Marry, was it?" answered Tabitha. "The scurvy villain boasted of conquests he had never made, and dared to put his wicked desires on paper. These, by the cruel treachery of a trusted servant, were made known to Master Leyton, who, in the frenzy of jealousy, believed his wife disloyal."

"And was she not?" asked Jacob, softly.

"Was she not!" exclaimed Tabitha; "should I have given up my life to her if she had been? No;

I know her to be most foully belied, and I saw the dreadful consequences of her unjust condemnation — madness, uncle — madness, and a melancholy that was worse than madness.”

“Lord, pardon us all!” said Jacob; “though I had no hand in the matter, I have often spoken lightly of her, poor lady. Well, what are you seeking with me?”

Walter then narrated — of course with the occasional assistance of Tabitha’s ready tongue — all that had passed so lately; and that Walter had tried in vain to gain knowledge of any of Mistress Leyton’s friends that might be living in London, and to whom her husband would also be known.

“Thou hast hit the right nail on the head, Walter Gray, in striking at the Mermaid,” said Jacob, “and gladly will I serve thee to my uttermost. There is an old friend of the Leytons, who hath been made a lieutenant of the City. He has been long a merchant, and hath preserved his love of a flask of the best Burgundy to be had between this and the vineyards that grow the divine liquor. Sir Ralph Newberry.”

“Sir Ralph Newberry!” cried Tabitha; “the very man to do us service. He was the playmate of my mistress.”

“There is another — well — acquaintance of the Leytons, who might do somewhat, did I clearly know the course you were sailing,” said Magnus.

"Master Leyton stands high in Court favour; and if Master Gray is seeking preferment, I doubt not but his uncle——"

"Is he then in London?" asked Tabitha, earnestly.

"Yes; and daily, as I hear, at Prince Rupert's lodgings, in Whitehall. Have I guessed rightly?"

"No, Master Magnus," replied Walter; "and yet he holds possession of what I most covet on earth——next to my aunt's honourable acquittal, and her restoration to place and honour."

Walter then told Magnus the object of his aunt's visit to town——that she had resolved to see her husband, and by such evidence as she possessed convince him of the cruel wrong which had been done to her by him and by others.

Jacob sat very thoughtful for a few moments; and then, having drained his tankard, said——"I am unwise, mayhap, in meddling with matters which concern me not——losing the profit of a good customer, who drinks his five quarts a day of the rarest, but I have done some evil in my time, and I will hope that the good deed I intend may be put down against my score."

"What do you mean, uncle?" asked Tabitha.

"Suppose, and suppose, and suppose," replied Jacob, as though he hesitated to commit himself irrevocably to his good work, "I were to bring evidence of thy mistress's innocence into court, that

even the jealous blackamoor they show at the 'Globe' would believe; what then?"

"I would call thee the best, the dearest, the honestest of men," replied Tabitha, giving Jacob a hearty kiss by way of instalment.

"Thou wouldst lie, then, Tabitha — lie most liberally," said Jacob; "but I will strive my best to do as I have said. Come thou and Master Gray hither to-morrow about noon, and I may have news to tell ye. In the meantime, seek Sir Ralph Newberry; say thou art my niece, and he will give thee sight of him. He lives hard by, in Milk-street; his sign is Walter Raleigh's Head, painted on a gold background — meaning the El Dorado which that noble voyager dreamed of."

Walter Gray having warmly expressed his thanks to Jacob, and Tabitha having kissed her uncle again, they took their leave, promising to be at the Mermaid on the morrow at the hour appointed.

CHAPTER X.

AT Tabitha's request, she again accompanied Walter to the Mermaid; but as their experience of Fleet-street had been rather unsatisfactory, they decided to take the quieter road to the City down Old Bourne, and across the Fleet river to Snorer-hill — or Snow-hill, as it has been since named. The little gardens in front of the houses in Old Bourne were a pleasant exchange for the noisy, impudent 'prentices; and Walter was congratulating Tabitha on the advantages of their selected route when a loud shout reached them, and looking down Old Bourne-hill, they saw a crowd of rabble come pouring out of Farringdon, and then make for the hill.

"What means yonder medley?" asked Walter of a staid old gentleman who was tending the flowers in his garden.

The old man looked in the direction indicated, and then said, carelessly, "A common sight enough to the dwellers in Old Bourne — a rogue on his way to the gallows at Tyburn. But step into my garden until the cart has passed, or the mob will take pleasure in spoiling two such decent people."

"Oh la! 'a mercy!" exclaimed Tabitha, "that we should come to such a sorry sight. Prithee, Master Walter, accept of the gentleman's courtesy;" and so saying, the terrified woman ran into the garden, followed by Walter.

Old Bourne was then the road to Tyburn-tree, and so continued to be for many a year. Nearly opposite to where Walter and Tabitha were placed was the George tavern, at whose door the unhappy culprits used to stop to drink, and to show off their bravado, as did clever Tom Clinch, to whom Swift has given an infamous immortality.*

The wretch in the cart, however, did not appear to have much of the bravo left in him, for, though he strove to smile and wag his head as if defying his fate, the ghastly pallor of his cheeks, and the occasional tremor which seized him, told the mortal agony which really possessed him. He took his draught, however, and when doing so, turned about to salute the gazers on all sides. The moment Walter caught a good sight of the man's features, he exclaimed —

* "As clever Tom Clinch while the rabble was bawling,
Rode stately through Holborn to die in his calling,
He stopped at the George for a bottle of sack,
And promised to pay for it *as he came back*.

His waistcoat and stockings and breeches were white,
His cap had a new cherry ribbon to tie't;
The maids to the doors and the balconies ran,
And said, Lack-a-day, he's a proper young man."

The removal of the gallows from Tyburn to Newgate was due to the interference of the philanthropist Howard.

The scoundrel that headed the King's Rogues, and who would have taken my life at the Hall!" and turning to Tabitha as he spoke, he was surprised to find she had fallen on her knees, and appeared to be praying with great earnestness and volubility. As Walter did not feel justified in disturbing such a pious office, he looked again towards the cart which was moving on towards the gallows. The shout of the rabble dying away, Tabitha removed her hands from her face. Her large blue eyes were red with tears, and her comely face "as pale as a parsnip."

"Thou art a good girl," said the old man, "to pray for such a scoundrel as he, gone to his proper ending. A traitor to all who trusted him, and so mean a rogue that he beat a poor woman to death for her market pence."

Tabitha received these words of commendation "under false pretences," for the sight of Robin Hummall riding to Tyburn in the hangman's cart had a personal effect upon Tabitha, who remembered that she might have been the malefactor's wife, and lived for the rest of her life a hempen widow. In the fulness of her thankfulness for her deliverance, she had fallen on her knees and continued to repeat as much of the Book of Common Prayer and the Puritan Directory as she could remember, until Robin Hummall had passed out of her sight for ever.

Jacob Magnus had prepared a savoury and substantial refection for his visitors, and begged neither to stint of meat or liquor. Jacob excused himself from partaking of more than a slice or so of neat's tongue, for, in sooth, his past night's drinking had left him with a jaded appetite; but he found sustenance in the flagon — seeming, like a snipe, to live chiefly on suction.

“And now to business,” said Jacob. “Yesterday I made bold to wait on Sir Ralph Newberry at his accompting-house, and was, I need scarcely say, honourably received. I told him what had passed between us, and for a time Sir Ralph appeared like one beside himself. ‘I never doubted her!’ said he, ‘I never doubted her! and for that reason, Jacob’ — he calls me Jacob at times — ‘and for that reason I have never questioned that’ — well, he said — ‘Sot Cotterell. It would have been to do her wrong.’”

“Bless him! — bless him!” cried Tabitha; “Sir Ralph was always a true gentleman.”

“He demanded your mistress's lodging — whose whereabouts thou hadst fortunately given me — called to his head clerk, and bade him hasten to my lady and bid her be ready to go abroad. Then he counter-ordered, and said — ‘No; it would be late, and he would see Master Leyton first.’ In fact, as I told thee, he was like one distraught.”

“My good uncle, you will have done better

work to-day than ever thou didst in thy life, if my poor lady gets justice through thy means," said Tabitha, putting her arms round Jacob's neck.

Walter also thanked Magnus for what he had done, and then added —

"You spoke of that villain, Cotterell. Is the fellow living?"

Jacob placed his finger on his lip, and pointed to a door which separated the sanctorum from the public drinking-room.

"He is there, Master Walter! — he is there. And — nay, stay where thou art, sir, or you will ruin all," replied Jacob, checking Walter's movement towards the door. "You must not be rash, but wait the coming of Sir Ralph, who hath age and wisdom."

"It is a hard measure of patience to keep my hands from the villain's throat," said Walter. "Sir Ralph must drag the truth from him if his life comes with it."

"He will, no doubt on't," replied Magnus, soothingly. "Now, prithee, get thee home to Mistress Leyton, and bid her prepare to receive her old friend and his lady. Nay, be ruled by me; I promise thee your noble aunt shall have justice, and you a fitting revenge."

And so Jacob contrived at last to quiet Walter, and to despatch him and Tabitha back again to his aunt's lodgings.

"'Tis well he has gone, or there would have been letting of blood, which is a thing I abhor in my own house," thought Jacob. "Now I must go share either flask or flagon with Master Cotterell. It offends if I drink not with him."

Few who had known the smart, rattling Dick Cotterell of twenty years ago, would have recognised him in the bloated, blotched-faced man who sat apart in the public room of the Mermaid smoking his Trinidado out of a long silver pipe, occasionally, or rather frequently, moistening his lips by an application to a powerful compound of brandy and a strong Xeres wine, flavoured with cinnamon: it was called clamber-head. He had become what Newberry had named him, a confirmed sot. Immediately after his cowardly attack upon Leyton, he, to avoid the consequences of what could hardly be called a duello, flew to his estate in Wales, and lay there in hiding for more than twelve months. Having heard that Leyton had suddenly disappeared from society and his friends, Cotterell ventured to return to his old haunts, but found himself coldly treated by all his acquaintance, with the exception of a few miserable fellows, who were content to be his boon companions, and to participate in the debauch for which Cotterell was paymaster.

Sir Ralph Newberry had for a long time ceased his intimacy with Cotterell; but when they occasionally met — either in the street or at a tavern —

a few words of courtesy were interchanged, and that was all. Newberry was out of England when the great trouble of the Leytons came upon them, and he had therefore only heard in part, and with the variations, additions, and subtractions to which a story is subjected in the course of long traversing about. Newberry had seen somewhat too much of the world to believe in the impossibility of the existence of faithless friends and wives; but he would never admit — not even to himself — that Maud Netherby had been untrue to herself or to her husband. When the busy tongues of censorious acquaintance condemned the absent woman, Newberry, true to his early faith in his boyish love, bravely asserted her innocence, and usually confounded her detractors, as none could support their insinuations to her discredit by one word of personal evidence.

Jacob Magnus could not have gone to a more earnest friend of the Leytons than Sir Ralph, who soon devised a plan by which it was hoped some of the great mischief of the past might be repaired. It was with this view that Magnus intruded his company on his half-tipsy guest.

"I trust, Master Cotterell, that thy liquor is to thy liking," said Magnus, pausing for a moment or two before he sat down in the large stuffed chair which he usually occupied when seated amongst his guests.

"It's villanously short of its fair measure of brandy," replied Cotterell; "and the Xeres smacks vilely of the pigskin which contained it. Not even two sticks of cinnamon can deceive me, Jacob. I know the true wine, and can measure the strength of good spirit by the tip of my tongue."

"Thou dost only jest, I know, Master Cotterell," replied Jacob, seating himself. "The wine and the spirit are fit tipples for an emperor; but your villanous tobacco, which, as the player says, 'is only fit to fill a man with smoke and embers,' leaves thy palate no true discernment."

"Thou liest, Silenus!" replied Dick; the nicotian weed is a relish to good liquor — but call for thy glass, and help me to see this tankard to the end."

Jacob called for a drinking-glass; and as all liquor was alike to him, he soon aided Cotterell to finish the flagon.

"Let's have no more of that hell-broth!" said Cotterell, "but like a true friend, Jacob, be honest for one bout, and bring a bottle or two, an' thou canst, of veritable Canary."

"I will — I will, Master Cotterell — a wine above price, but thou carest not for that I know;" and having retired to a private cellar, of which he alone kept the key, he returned shortly with a magnum bottle, and ordered the tapster to bring

two of his Venice glasses to do honour to the wine.

"Here is liquid gold, Master Cotterell, and cold as an icicle — a draught to cool Dives' burning tongue if he could get it," said Jacob.

"Don't be — profane, Magnus," hiccuped Cotterell; "though I haven't been inside a church — save Paul's Walk — for these twenty years, I'll listen to no profanity. Come, pour out a glass of Dives — I mean the t'other — and let us see if thy boast is borne out by thy liquor."

"An' it be not, I'll empty the magnum at my own cost," said Jacob. "Ah! there's a posy! Smell it, smell it, my master! I always envy my corkscrew, because it tastes such liquor before me."

"By Bacchus and his pards! but thou hast not lied!" said Cotterell. "It is rare wine!"

"I'm glad to hear thee say so," replied Jacob. "Those who have good wine like good drinkers: there is the best of the one, and thou art the best of the other."

"Don't flatter me, Jacob — don't flatter me; d——e! I hate flattery!" replied Cotterell. "I can take my *quantum sufficit*, or perhaps my *quantum pluribus* — is that dog-latin? — but there are better heads than mine that can beat me by a bottle, and say their criss-cross table without foundering. Fill my glass! What news is stirring?"

"I have not been abroad to-day," replied Jacob.

"Our last night's rouse kept me late in bed. Yet stay, there was one here who had come from the Court, and had seen, at Prince's Rupert's lodgings, who think ye? — old Master Leyton."

"Leyton!" exclaimed Cotterell; "I thought he had been dead long ago?"

"And so thought I, but he is alive, and a great man at Court, I'm told," replied Jacob, adding, after a pause, "Ifeekins! I am losing my head, for I had clean forgotten somewhat that may pleasure thee. My niece Tabitha — you remember Tabitha?"

Cotterell nodded his head.

"She hath been here and tells me thine old light-o'-love, Mistress Leyton, is in town!"

"Peace, raven, or I'll brain thee!" shouted Cotterell, seizing the bottle.

Jacob shrugged his shoulders, and then quietly raised his glass to his lips. It was well that no other guest was present; but as Jacob had discontinued his ordinary since his wife's decease, there was rarely much company at the Mermaid until after the business hours of the neighbouring citizens.

Cotterell sat silent for a time, and then rose to his feet, and paced with unsteady steps about the room.

"Friends have ruined wives and pinked husbands before now, and ruffled with the best," he muttered.

"Why should I hide my head like a hunted ostrich, and grow maudlin — maudlin!"

Jacob did not interrupt the meditations he had provoked, but sat gazing at the empty fire-place.

After a time, Cotterell returned to his seat at the table, and filling his glass, drained it at a draught.

"What was wine made for, Magnus?" he asked, after a short pause.

"For good fellowship and good fellows," replied Jacob, quickly. "See how the bubbles on the top laugh till they burst! 'Tis pleasant to drink mirth by the pint."

"Dost think I drink for good fellowship!" asked Cotterell, with a sneer.

"Yes, truly," replied Jacob, "for I know thou hast a good fellow to drink with thee."

"Thou art a merry rogue, Magnus!" said Cotterell, sadly; "but I have always a companion that scoffs at song and jest, who watches the smile upon my lips only to drive it back into my heart."

"Master Cotterell — Master Cotterell!" exclaimed Jacob, "what playhouse rant is this! The wine hath disordered thy wits!"

"To what will this lead?" continued Cotterell, in a tipsy voice. "It hath made me a drunkard, and will drive me to beggary, and then will come more drink and then madness."

"Fore George! don't prate such nonsense!" said Jacob. "Take another glass of wine."

"Wine! wine is to make men merry!" replied Cotterell. "Fetch me some brandy."

Jacob, who had great faith in the consolation of strong drinks, offered no opposition to Cotterell's unwise request, but produced a moderate-sized wicker-covered flask from his pocket, saying —

"At thy service, Master Cotterell. I always carry a small modicum of the best in case of colic, spasms, cough, cold, sprains, vertigo, or, in short, any and every disorder."

But Jacob jested to a dull ear, and Cotterell sat silent, ever and anon sipping at Jacob's flask, until it was empty.

The effect of the brandy soon became apparent in Cotterell's tipsy bearing.

"My familiar — my devil hath left me," he said, "and now let us toast bright eyes and cherry lips. I toast Mistress Magnus!"

"Ah!" replied Jacob, not caring to enter into any discussion. "*There* was an eye — blinking and winking like the fag end of a Christmas candle."

"By Venus and her pigeons, thou shalt not abuse Mistress Magnus! I'll make thee play Sir Pandarus of Troy, and light me by that good torch in thy face," and Cotterell made an ineffectual effort to rise.

"Touch not mine nose," replied Jacob, laughing.

"It is of value, for it hath cost both time and money to bring it to this hue! What a marvel is it that pale drinks should paint the nose crimson!"

"None of thy tapster's farrago!" said Cotterell. "Where is fair Mistress Magnus?"

"Where she hath been silent for these five years past, and where I am in no haste to join her, good helpmate that she was," replied Jacob.

"By Jove, an' I had forgotten she had departed! I'm drunk, Jacob — no doubt on't — no doubt."

And either his potations or the conviction of his inebriety overpowering him, Master Richard Cotterell laid his head upon the table, and soon made known that he was asleep.

Jacob Magnus shook his head as he looked upon the sleeping sot, and muttered —

"I have managed this business vilely. I was to have drawn confession from him of the wrong he did to Mistress Leyton's fair fame, and I have made him incontinently drunk. He hath weaker brains than I had thought for, but for a certes men are degenerating."

Jacob soon disposed of what wine remained in the bottle, and then with steady foot and solemn face he retired into his sanctorum to sleep away what little obfuscation his debauch had produced.

When Walter returned to his aunt's lodgings, he found that she had been visited by Sir Ralph and

Lady Newberry. What had taken place at the interview had produced a most consolatory effect on Mistress Leyton, as she had learned, almost for the first time, that there had been many amongst her friends who would not believe the calumnies uttered to her prejudice, but condemned the hasty decision of her husband, and his unnecessary desertion of his friends and position.

Both Sir Ralph and Lady Newberry had declared their determination to strive to the utmost to procure a reversal of Leyton's cruel sentence, and to obtain a restoration of the mother's rights and intercourse with her child. Fortunately, Major Fordyke, the brother of Lady Newberry, was in high favour with Prince Rupert, and had, she knew, served with Leyton. This unexpected combination of circumstances promised, it was augured, a favourable result, and the Newberrys left Mistress Leyton to go at once to Major Fordyke and take council as to the manner in which the Prince's influence could be used, in order to bring Leyton to a full and calm consideration of the events of the past.

Major Fordyke was luckily at his lodgings when the Newberrys called.

"This is a delicate matter to meddle in, dear sister," said the major, with a smile. "I know Leyton well, and can hardly believe but he must have had conclusive reasons for what he did. He is a

cool-headed fellow, and would not have been readily deceived."

"You judge like all men — I mean like most men. Sir Ralph is as convinced of Mistress Leyton's innocence as I am," replied Lady Newberry.

"Ah, yes!" said the Major; "but I fancy I have heard that Maud Netherby might have been Lady Newberry when she was ——"

"Eight years old," said Sir Ralph. "But, brother, this is no light matter, I assure thee. The happiness of more than one life depends upon the restitution of this poor lady to home and reputation."

"Well, I will do what I can to serve the lady, certainly," said Fordyke; "but I would rather ride through Brentford again than face Colonel Leyton on this business. However, thou hast my promise. When must I advance?"

"As soon as may be," replied his sister. "Every hour is one of misery to Mistress Leyton, which is now passed away from her husband."

"Look ye!" said Fordyke, as though struck with some sudden thought that looked promising. "It chanced that I was yesterday at Leyton's lodgings on business of his highness, and that done, our talk fell into —— No! I will keep my thought to myself in case I raise hopes which may not be realized. In the meantime, Sir Ralph, do you seek out the original sin — the serpent that destroyed the Pa-

radise thou hast described at Leyton Hall. What name hath he?"

"Cotterell."

"Ay, Cotterell, and tell him I will measure swords with him if he doth not make instant confession that he hath belied your friend ——"

"The fellow's beneath a soldier's notice," replied Newberry. "I'll get a London 'prentice to club the life out of him if he refuse to sign his own villany. I have already set on a boon companion of his to draw out evidence."

"Good. Clara had better remain here," said Fordyke, "so that succour may be at hand should I need it. I shall look for thee to supper, Ralph, and if thou hast eloquence enough bring Penelope — I mean thy poor client, with thee."

Newberry mounted his horse, followed by his serving-man, and rode back to the City. He dismissed his attendant when they had reached Cheapside, and walked down Bread-street to the Mermaid.

Jacob Magnus had barely slept off his mid-day debauch, when Newberry requested to see him.

"Well, Master Magnus," said Newberry, "hast thou made the rascal reveal ——"

Jacob laid his finger on his lip, and pointed to the still sleeping Cotterell.

"Is he sober enough, think ye, to understand me?" asked Newberry.

"I should say so, Sir Ralph; but have a care! He wakes up savage like, after such a debauch as he has had to-day."

"Oh, I fear him nothing!" replied Newberry, and then going to Cotterell, shook him rather rudely by the shoulder. "Cotterell! Dick Cotterell!"

"Speak — I hear you!" answered the sot, without raising his head.

"Art awake and sober?"

"What's that to thee," replied Cotterell, raising his head, and looking fiercely at his questioner.

"Nay, I meant not to offend thee," said Newberry.

"But there was offence in thy question, Sir Ralph Newberry; and I bear not with that from any man!" replied Cotterell.

"I prithee, forgive whatever I said amiss. I have grave business with thee," said Newberry.

"I hate business," replied Cotterell, "especially at my tavern. What says the player, 'Shall I not take mine ease in mine inn?' Well, what is't? Jacob, a cup of some of thy d — e drinks. I can't talk dry lipped."

Newberry (when the wine had been brought) proceeded with great consideration, and carefully selecting his words, so as to avoid giving his listener offence, to acquaint Cotterell with the purport of his visit, and was rendered rather hopeful of a satisfactory result, as Cotterell listened attentively and

without any appearance of anger. He sat resting his elbows on the table, and holding his chin in one hand, his eyes steadfastly fixed upon the face of Newberry.

"And so you wish me to write myself down a villain, and confess to a rascality I was never guilty of?" asked Cotterell.

"Not guilty?"

"No; I never maligned Mistress Leyton. It was her own husband who accused and convicted her," said Cotterell.

"But you boasted——"

"What of that? I did not accuse," said Cotterell. "I sign no lie against myself——"

"You wrote to her?"

"I did; the letter was a folly. How Leyton drew such meaning from it I know not. You have my answer, I sign nothing. Where is Leyton to be found?" asked Cotterell, rising.

Newberry was so confounded by the turn the conversation had taken, that he could make no reply.

"No matter," said Cotterell, "I can hunt my own game. Magnus, my sword," and having received his weapon, Master Richard Cotterell marched out of the Mermaid.

When the Newberrys met at supper at Major Fordyke's, there seemed to have been little progress made towards the desired reconciliation of the Leytons.

Fordyke had interested Prince Rupert sufficiently to induce that good-natured person to go to Leyton's lodgings, and to enter somewhat on the painful subject of his domestic sorrow. But Leyton had stopped all discussion, by at once entreating the prince to forbear opening wounds, which if not closed altogether, yet had become deprived of their painfulness.

"But let not our defeat spoil our enjoyment," said the major; "and after supper I will tell thee of a plan of attack which presented itself to me some hours ago."

The expectation of some clever device to obtain the "consummation so devoutly to be wished," gave a zest to the supper.

"Then art silent, my friend," said the major, "and I am still thought guilty of no words to tell me I am still thought guilty of dare not repine. We are told that we are chastened for our good, but looking back, I feel my faults so venial that oftentimes the memento rises to my lips."

"Leyton's obstinacy amounts to cruelty—to revenge," said Newberry.

"I do not feel it to be so," replied Mistress Maud; "I remember his kind, his loving nature, and know how clear to him must the proofs of my guilt have appeared; before he would have condemned me!"

"Tis strange! You still love him!" said Newberry. "Love him? With all my soul! Did I not love him I should not care to wipe away the blot upon my name; but for his sake—for my child's sake, I

CHAPTER XI. AND LAST.

WHEN Sir Ralph Newberry visited Mistress Leyton on the morning after the failure of the prince's interview with her husband, and saw the look of hopeful expectancy in the poor lady's face, he could not find words to tell her of the ill-success of his mission. Mistress Leyton was quick-witted, and an expression of the deepest sorrow supplanted the look of hopefulness.

"Thou art silent, my friend," she said; "I need no words to tell me I am still thought guilty. I dare not repine. We are told that we are chastened for our good, but looking back, I feel my faults so venial that oftentimes the murmur rises to my lips."

"Leyton's obstinacy amounts to cruelty — to revenge," said Newberry.

"I do not feel it to be so," replied Mistress Maud; "I remember his kind, his loving nature, and know how clear to him must the proofs of my guilt have appeared, before he would have condemned me."

"'Tis strange! You still love him!"

"Love him? With all my soul! Did I not love him I should not care to wipe away the blot upon my fame; but for his sake — for my child's sake, I

would brave a hundred deaths to prove I was not unworthy of his name and love!"

"But Leyton will not seek to be convinced that he has wronged you. Nor would he believe Walter's story; and Studley's confession he would discredit, and tell us it had been obtained from him, by threats or bribes."

"Dost think so?"

"I fear so. The villain Cotterell's word would be held as worthless as himself," said Newberry, sadly.

"There's one he would believe," replied Mistress Leyton.

"Who?"

"Me. If I could reach his ear he would know there was truth in my words, and then let others testify."

"And what if he could be brought to hear thee? Couldst thou for a time command thyself to play a part that would demand a trial of all thy patience?"

"Yes, were it to thrust my hand into a fire and not cry out."

"Then endure a little longer and have hope. My wife will visit thee presently, and take thee into council. If I had found thee less constant, less resolute, thou shouldst have been spared the risk of further pain. As I know thee now, thou hast a right to make a venture that may lead to a haven or end in an utter wreck. Wilt thou brave the peril?"

"I will, be it whatever it may, and promise to abide by any counsel you may give. My hand upon it."

Newberry took her hand, and pressing it to his lips, said —

"Brave, much-wronged friend, I leave you with more hope than I have yet had in this unhappy business."

When Newberry had left, Maud strove to conjecture what was to be her trial; but it was not until the arrival of Lady Newberry that she understood the effort she was to be called upon to make for her exculpation.

Although the kindly interference of Prince Rupert had met with what might be considered a peremptory rebuff, Colonel Leyton showed no displeasure towards Major Fordyke, even if he had suspected him to have been the cause of the intrusion upon his domestic sorrows. On the contrary, he affected more than he had hitherto done, the society of the major, and received with evident pleasure the visits of Sir Ralph and Lady Newberry.

Alice at first was very reserved, if she was not positively rude in her reception of Lady Newberry's advances to intimacy; but as her conduct was generously attributed to her unhappy position, her new acquaintance continued her attentions, until at last Alice began to regard her, and to derive great solace from her disinterested friendship.

Lady Newberry had of course never questioned Alice on the cause of the melancholy which oppressed her, knowing, as she did, the story of her family; but by many indirect ways the new friend contrived to exhibit a consolatory sympathy, and to inspire a feeling of hope to which Alice had been long a stranger. The happy consequences of this intercourse became evident, in the return of healthful colour to the poor faded cheeks, and the old mirthfulness to the voice of Alice; and of this no one was sooner observant than the sightless father. He knew by the changed tone and the cold pulseless hand when the bitterness of sorrow had found its way into his darling's heart; and he also was the first to discern, in the altered music of her voice, that the sweetness of her youth had in part come back to her. He questioned his faithful Hafed as to the truth of his surmises, and received the fullest confirmation. Alice was the light of Leyton's home; and when a cloud came over her, the shadow fell upon all within reach of her influence.

"That dear Lady Newberry," said Alice; "she hath done me such marvellous good, that I have parted from my physician, who told me that his medicaments were no longer needed — I had found a better leech than he."

"May God bless her for her goodness," replied Leyton; and tears stole from his sightless eyes, for a thought had come into his mind, that, had one

proved true to him and to his child, there would have been no need to seek elsewhere for the companionship which they both required.

Lady Newberry was announced before the conversation proceeded, and that good lady saw that Leyton had been weeping, and could not refrain asking the cause.

"They were tears of thankfulness," said Alice, "I am sure, dear Lady Newberry. We had been speaking of thy great kindness to me, and acknowledging how much my restored health was due to it."

"I am fortunate in being the ministrant," replied Lady Newberry. "Any other person who could love you as I do, Alice, would have worked the same cure."

"Oh no!"

"Oh yes; is it to be wondered at that thou shouldst be moped, and have the spleen, and vertigoes, and dolours, and a thousand other diseases of the fancy, seeing that thou hast no companionship but an old soldier and a heathen menial?"

"It need not be so," replied Leyton, quickly; "but Alice will not see my company."

"Old battered cavaliers who have nothing to talk of but their wounds and hair-breadth 'scapes, and camp rouses. I know them — noble, brave fellows, who have won the right to fight their battles o'er again; but hardly fit companions for a young maiden of nineteen."

"I fear there is truth in what thou hast said," answered Leyton, sighing deeply.

"Now confess, Alice — am I not right? Dost not tire rather of thy solitude? Wouldst not go abroad in the world, and have some one on whom to expend thy womanly sympathy? Say such an one as I am?"

"Oh! yes, yes!" cried Alice, embracing Lady Newberry. "I am so much happier when thou art with me, that I feel a sorrow when we bid 'good-bye,' although I hope that to-morrow will bring thee again."

"Dost hear, colonel? I am quite right," said Lady Newberry. "Why not accept the knowledge, and act on't?"

"I hardly follow thy meaning," replied Leyton.

"Plainly, sith thou asked me to advise thee, Alice needs companionship. I have, first, from my sympathy at her loneliness, and then from the love that has grown up for her, expended more time at thy lodgings than is compatible with my duties as a good housewife; and my husband's affairs have suffered somewhat."

"I am grieved that thy goodness to me —"

"It was not for that I spoke, dear child, but to influence thy father to find a substitute for me," replied Lady Newberry.

"I guess your meaning," said Leyton. "You would have me find a fitting companion for Alice?"

"I would," replied Lady Newberry; one who had experience to guide her, and qualities to interest her; an' such an one I know."

"That is fortunate," said Leyton.

"She is a poor gentlewoman — a distant kinswoman of my husband — without child or husband; but who has such rare qualities of mind and disposition that Alice would soon love her. Of that I feel assured. Her name is Mistress Stanley."

"You will add to your benefits, my dear lady," said Leyton, "if thou wouldst undertake this business for me, an' it be convenient to thee, with the least delay."

"I will send for her to-morrow," replied Lady Newberry; "and, if I can, persuade her to undertake this pleasant duty."

The arrival of a gentleman allowed the two ladies to retire; and when they were alone Alice almost sank rather than sat down, and her tears flowed freely.

"Why art thou crying, dear child?" asked Lady Newberry.

It was some moments before Alice could speak.

"I have for the last few days," she said, "so longed to unburthen my full heart to thee that I have scarcely slept. I have held my peace because I thought I was betraying my father's secret; but our talk to-day has made me regardless of that consideration, and I must tell thee my secret."

"What if I know it already?" said Lady Newberry, pressing her arm closely around Alice, who still stood clasping the speaker's neck.

"What if I know of thy father's exile, and its cause? — that I know what the world hath said of thy mother? that thou hast given thy maiden heart to one who hath his part in this shameful story?"

Alice wept aloud.

"Be comforted, my dear one — be comforted. Look in my face, that thou mayst believe my words. Thou canst not see for those tears; let me dry them with my kerchief. Now look at me, and trust my words. I know thy mother to have been, and to be still, most loving, true, and loyal; that never, by word, or deed, or thought, did she wrong to thy deceived father or to thee!"

Alice fell upon her knees, and, raising her clasped hands, spoke aloud the thanksgiving of her heart.

When she was calm enough to hear more, Lady Newberry said —

"Thy father is hard to win to reason. He judged rashly; he hath hardened his heart that it might not condemn him. But the truth shall prevail."

"Yes; it shall!" said Alice. "Where can I see my mother?"

"Here, in this house — here, in her place. But, to speak in the humour of the time, if we cannot

“treat, nor storm, we must mine and sap, Alice. Thy father is a stubborn foe to his own peace.”

“When shall I see my mother?” asked Alice.

“Canst thou not guess?” asked Lady Newberry.

“Yes, when I see —”

“Mistress Stanley! Thou seest we have been plotting! Thou canst now meet thy mother without wounding her sensitive love by the least show of distrust. And now that thou knowest how deep I am in all thy secrets, hast thou no word for a poor youth who is nigh dead with love-sickness?”

Alice’s face became crimson; but after a moment of maidenly confusion she took a flower from her bosom, and gave it to Lady Newberry. That clever diplomatist, having received the flower with a smile, and kissed the burning cheek of the fair donor, took her departure.

The gentleman who had been announced was, like Leyton, blind also. He too, had had his share of domestic sorrows, and, knowing Leyton’s story in part, had often of late, when they had met, spoken magic words of sympathy. It was his gift to utter “thoughts that live and words that burn.”

He had called to thank Leyton for his kindly interference in his behalf with the restored king, and when Charles the Second did the noblest act of his ignoble reign by leaving undisturbed his great antagonist — he who had sung of Paradise!

The two friends had talked of their domestic

griefs, and one had said — “How small — how insignificant were all our wretched squabbles, although they made up the chiefest sorrows of our lives.”

Leyton thought of his words — thought of the strange and unexpected interview with his old and loved commander — thought of all which had happened at Leyton Hall, until he felt the foreshadowing of some coming event which was to bring him in collision with his old sorrows. On the following morning Leyton, attended by Hafed, had gone to take his daily exercise in the Park of St. James — then being planted and beautified — and afterwards to attend a morning council at the lodgings of Prince Rupert. There were many Cavalier friends, who had suffered in the king’s cause, to be served and considered, as well as many who stood in danger from their disloyalty, but who had claims upon the victorious party for services rendered to the Cavaliers in their hour of adversity.

It was during Leyton’s absence that Lady Newberry arrived at his lodgings, accompanied by a lady whom she desired to be announced as Mistress Stanley. Whilst the servant was placing chairs — oh, how tardily! — two hearts were beating tumultuously, and were only relieved by the flood of happy tears which came to the relief of mother and daughter as they stood locked in each other’s arms. Happy! — happy Maud! her child had called her mother, and by her embraces acquitted her of all dishonour!

Happy, happy Alice! — The vacancy in the heart, which a mother only can fill, was now overflowing with filial love, and the terrible affliction which had threatened to destroy the happiness of her young life had passed away, never to return!

It were vain to attempt to describe the incidents — the outpourings of those two long pent-up hearts; the linked hands would not part — the loving eyes would not look away, except when the lips, grown silent from excess of happiness, were pressed again and again upon each other.

All Maud's sorrows were for a time forgotten, and she no longer doubted that her husband was to be restored to her.

It was late in the day when Leyton returned. He had gone to his own room to rest awhile, as was his wont, having dined abroad; and it was not until the evening that he requested to be visited by the newcomer, Mistress Stanley.

Leyton was seated, reclining, in a large chair, the light of two wax tapers falling on his face, when Maud, his wife, looked on him after seventeen years of cruel separation. The auburn locks had become nearly white; the bright, intelligent eyes were closed and sightless; the stalwart form was that of an aged man. And yet the old love was stronger in her heart, and but for the restraint she had promised to observe, she would have clasped her arms about him, nor loosed her hold until he had pronounced her

guiltless. As it was, she stood holding her hands upon her forehead and trembling as though an ague had seized her.

Had not Leyton been blind, he would have wondered at the group which stood at the entrance of his room. His daughter Alice and his daughter's friend supporting a woman, whose agitation was almost beyond control. He would have recognised, no doubt, a faded face, which had once appeared to him the most beautiful of all he had ever looked upon. But he was blind, and knew not who was near him. At last he heard a voice, and asked —

"Is Mistress Stanley here?"

"Yes, sir," was the scarce audible reply.

Only two brief words, and Leyton sat up in his chair! Had his ear caught some old familiar music?

"Our kind friend," said Leyton, with some effort, "our kind friend, Lady Newberry, hath told thee, no doubt, all the duties to be required of thee."

"Yes, sir."

Leyton paused again before he spoke.

"You are now, as I grieve to hear, childless, but we should not sorrow for the young. The flowers of Paradise spring from the graves of children. My daughter hath had a greater loss — her mother."

"Indeed, sir! I thought her mother still lived."

"Not to her — not to me!" said Leyton, excited. "She died, long years ago, the worst of

deaths! For the adulation of a villain she left all that was her home."

"That is very horrible; and was it proved?"

"Ay, madam, beyond the scepticism of my love."

"Dare I ask your proofs, sir? I, too, have suffered."

Leyton turned his sightless eyes towards the speaker before he answered.

"I do not brook such questioning often, madam; but you — yes, I had proofs. I had brought to me the letter which proposed her flight."

"That was no proof of her guilt."

"But with it her answer, showing a preconception of the villain's purpose, and her fear of detection by her husband."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Mistress Leyton, aghast almost at what she had heard.

"So I had thought once; but I read the words — read them now, for they are ever present to my mind," said Leyton, clasping his hands upon his forehead.

"Some omitted word, some word added, must have changed her meaning. It was a fragment, which expressed nothing, perhaps, but which you weighed against the unchanged love of years."

"Who speaks to me?" said Leyton, starting up.

"The messenger of truth, Colonel Leyton. Thou hast bruised her whom thou hadst sworn to cherish. The selfishness of your pride made thee condemn the

innocent unheard. The world's opinion was more to thee than thy wife; and for false honour thou hast sacrificed thyself and her."

"Who speaks to me? Why will none answer?" cried Leyton, extending his hands, as though to touch the speaker.

"One who can prove thou hast been unjust."

"Who art thou? Think that I am blind, and tell me who thou art."

"Maud, thy wife!" and she fell upon her knees at Leyton's feet, "who knows her solemn protestation of her innocence will not be unbelieved; who vows, before the God who holds her life in his hand, that never hath she done thee wrong, or forfeited her just claim to be thy honoured wife."

Leyton shook violently, and tried to cry out, but could not.

"Am I believed? Or art thou the only one who sets my word at naught?"

"Walter Gray!" Leyton said, with effort.

"My sister's child — the unhappy cause of much that hath happened between us. My sister sent for me — conscious that she was about to die — thou wert away in France, I thought — I went to Constance, and received, as her last gift and that of her noble husband, their only child, Walter Gray."

"No, no! I cannot — cannot have been so unjust!" murmured Leyton.

"Shall I bring other proofs than my own word?"

Walter hath Reuben Studley's dying confession. How for revenge for a wrong you did him years ago, he abused your ear — led you to believe the letters you have trusted to were evidences of my guilt. The man Cotterell lives!"

Leyton groaned with suppressed agony.

"I am not believed!" said Mistress Leyton, rising up. "'Tis well I am prepared with witnesses ——"

Newberry and Walter entered the room, followed by Cotterell, who had evidently been qualifying himself for the occasion by strong drink.

"Walter," said Mistress Leyton, "give me that paper which the villain Studley signed. Whose eyes will you trust to read it, Leyton?"

"Give it to me! — give it to me!" said Leyton, extending his outstretched hands.

"Not till its truth's acknowledged. It is in part my sentence to life or death!" said Mistress Leyton, now roused into indignation. "Stand forward, fellow. I speak to you, Richard Cotterell."

"No! let him not look upon me. Drive him from the house!" cried Leyton.

"Oh, well! an' I care not to stay," said Cotterell, doggedly. "Thou wouldst not hear me years ago when I should have told thee the same tale as now. Mistress Leyton treated me as became your wife; she spurned me from her ——"

But as his voice seemed to excite Leyton, Walter and Newberry removed Cotterell from the room.

"Has that villain gone?" asked Leyton.

"He hath. What then?" asked Mistress Leyton.

"For mercy's sake, speak not to me in anger. I am so utterly oppressed by the deep sense of all the wrong I have done to thee, my poor injured Maud ——"

"No more — no more!" exclaimed his wife, clasping her arms about his neck. She kissed his cheek, and then swooned upon his breast.

Before the autumn had passed wreaths of pale blue smoke curling from the chimneys of Leyton Hall proclaimed that its long-deserted rooms were again to be full of life. The old hedges of yew which had grown wild and shapeless were again clipped into rounded verdant walls, and here and there diversified by fantastic forms which would have puzzled a modern student of natural history. The pleasaunces and lawns, long resigned to rank vegetation, were mown again, and made to the tread soft as a three-piled carpet. The terrace walk was shaven smooth or in part strewn with broken spar, and on the boundary-wall a stately peacock stalked in the full pride of his gorgeous plumage, at times disturbing his neighbours, the rooks, by his discordant cries.

When the winter sun shone on the terrace walk,

a blind man, leaning fondly on a lady's arm, went to and fro, seeing with her eyes what otherwise would have been lost to him. Guests came and went — the Newberrys amongst them every year — and Alice Leyton and Walter Gray would sometimes form their escort through the park, to return at footpace, gazing in each other's faces, and holding "sweet converse" together. Poor men and women came and went also, returning happier for the dole they had received at the old Hall. When Christmas-tide came round, there were light, music, and seasonable revelry within, and two lovers led the dance for four successive years, and then they married, and for other years they still led the dance.

Tabitha — Mistress Tabitha now — was house-keeper, as any would have known who had seen the burnished bunch of keys hanging at her side. Jacob Magnus, when he died, left her all that the Mermaid had left him. Colonel Leyton's bailiff, John Hoskins, sought to win what little heart Tabitha had left; but though John was a thriving man, and had a pretty home, Tabitha, remembering what sorrows of her dear mistress she had witnessed, could not leave the sight of her new daily happiness — not to mention Mistress Tabitha's two cosy rooms, her well-spread table, and "brief authority." No, Tabitha could not abandon all these; and so she refused John Hoskins, who was not much disturbed by his rejection, seeing that in a month he married the pretty dairymaid.

Hafed was still the constant attendant of the colonel, and had contrived, by Tabitha's assistance, to speak a *lingua franca* which the good-natured house-keeper pretended to understand.

It matters little what is the end of Master Richard Cotterell, so long as he clings to his old vices. And Cotterell did so — drinking! drinking! but never being able to drown the memory of the past.

Any who may have felt an interest in our story will look in vain to find a trace of Leyton Hall or the neighbouring village of Rockley. Nor will they find in pleasant Dovedale the secret way to the old Hall, although it may be conjectured where its entrance was; but it can only be conjecture.

Gentle reader! we kiss your hand, and thank you for your patience.

HEARTS ARE TRUMPS.

A DRAMATIC STORY.

CHAPTER I.

THERE are few more happy retreats from the perplexities and disappointments of this uncertain life, than a well-appointed London Tavern, and the White Posts in — Street was, twenty years ago, pre-eminently cosy. Near to one of the most fashionable streets of the day, it was frequented by persons of limited means, but whose social position made them excellent judges of the *cuisine* of the White Posts; and their patronage gave assurance that no inferior gastronomy was permitted to obtain there. The exclusiveness of a club was necessarily wanting, and the society to be met there could not fail to be alloyed by some of the black sheep of what is called “the fashionable world,” but who, from their external appearance and correct behaviour, rendered detection difficult, even by those whose experience of mankind had been long and general. No disparagement this to the White Posts, for

“Where the palace where foul things intrude not?”

A constant visitor was Mr. Robert Ruby; a man of gentlemanly bearing, although somewhat of an ancient dandy, being apparently between fifty and sixty years of age. His clothes were cut with scrupulous regard to his fine figure, and he wore a full-curved brown wig (once known as a George the Fourth), a purple cravat, and kid gloves of a delicate lemon colour. His Wellington boots were faultless in their polish and fit, whilst his Stanhope hat was black and glossy as a raven. He usually dined alone, and seemed to have a limited acquaintance for a man who resided so much in London, and who evidently had his time at his own disposal. He was by no means averse to the society of strangers, and made himself particularly agreeable to those whom he felt disposed to entertain.

He was not altogether unknown to a few of the most respectable frequenters of the White Posts, and who would sometimes recognise him by a slight bow, but rarely courted a closer intimacy. The personal friends that now and then dined with him appeared to be equally respectable and unrecognised. He was a liberal guest and paymaster, and consequently stood high in the good opinion of James, the waiter.

But why envelope Mr. Ruby in a cloud of mystery? His pursuits and character were well known to many a ruined spendthrift and thoughtless scapegrace about town, and who recognised in the seeming gentleman the professed blackleg and proprietor of more

than one gaming-house in the bye streets of St. James.

His gains were known to have been considerable, and he was reckoned in the play-world a man of honour, exact in the fulfilment of his engagements, and punctual in the payment of his debts.

There were stories of kind actions done by old Bob Ruby, and many more of clever knavery and successful speculation on the turf and at the gaming-table. None knew more than this; none knew his origin or his family connexions, or whither he went for days altogether, always alone and secretly. By-and-bye we shall learn his story.

The London season was over, and the White Posts had lost many of its accustomed visitors; but Mr. Ruby was seated in his favourite corner, at dinner, with a young man whose acquaintance he had made the preceding day. The only other occupant of the room was a vulgar, cunning looking person, soberly dressed, and whose time appeared of great value, as he ate rapidly, and devoured the newspaper at the same time; now taking a mouthful of food, and now a paragraph of information. A blue bag lay on a chair beside him, and declared him to be a member of the legal profession, — “a gentleman, &c.” by Act of Parliament, and nothing else. Ever and anon he threw a furtive glance at Ruby and his young companion, and a faint smile played like a jack-o’-lantern, for a moment, over

his rugged features. Mr. Goad evidently knew Mr. Ruby.

When Mr. Goad was in the act of paying his bill, taking exception to every item, a gentleman entered the room and made his way to the table at which the grumbling lawyer was seated. There was something remarkably striking in the appearance of the new comer. He appeared to be about thirty years of age, although his hair was nearly white, except his moustache, and that was dark brown. His bearing was soldierly, and he had the easy confidence of a man accustomed to society. He had recognised Ruby also, but no sign of intimacy passed between them.

"Ah! Captain Wagstaff," said Goad, "how do you do? You're used to these places — I'm not — just glance over that bill, and tell me if the charges are not disgraceful?"

"Not in the least," replied Wagstaff, scarcely regarding the proffered paper, "for the White Posts. Sit down, Goad, and have a glass of wine."

"No wine for me! Never take wine at these places. I've already paid two shillings and ninepence, and owe the waiter his penny," answered Goad.

"Pshaw! the wine is my affair," said Wagstaff, and this liberal assurance overcame the lawyer's objection.

When the waiter had placed the wine upon the table, the Captain observed in a low whisper to

Goad: — "Ruby is at the opposite table I see, and wishes to remain unnoticed."

"So I discovered!" replied Goad. "What a dear old dove he looks! As a humbug, that man is unapproachable."

"Hush!" said Wagstaff. "I fancy he wants me to hear what he is saying."

"I think you said you were from Shrewsbury, and this your first visit to London?" remarked Ruby to his young companion.

"Yes. My father held some odd opinions, amongst others, that London was little better than a city of the plague, infected by all the vices to which youth is prone."

"A pardonable superstition in a *wealthy* country squire," said Ruby, with a marked emphasis on the pecuniary adjective.

The young man coloured very slightly as he replied, "He was not a squire, although a rich man."

"A trader," said Ruby, again smiling; "a more useful member of society. It is to trade, sir, that England owes her greatness and prosperity." And Ruby, making a slight bow, raised his glass to his lips. The young man accepted the compliment, with a look of pleasure, and his tempter continued:

"Have you many friends in London?"

"Scarcely any, except my late father's business connexions," was the reply.

"Then I rejoice to have met you," said Ruby;

"there is my card, I generally dine here, and shall have much pleasure in showing you any civilities in my power."

"You are very kind," answered the young man, giving Ruby a card bearing the name of Charles Wilmot. "I am leaving home for a few days to visit an aged relative near London. On my return I hope to renew our acquaintance."

"Were you at the Derby this year?" said Ruby, carelessly, after a short pause in the conversation.

"Yes," replied Wilmot, "though I take but little interest in horse racing, as I never bet."

"And I but seldom," said Ruby, holding up his glass to the light. "I lay a few pounds now and then to increase my interest in the race, just as one takes an olive to enhance one's zest for the wine."

"Ah, that is pardonable gambling," observed Wilmot; "but, to make a trade of betting, to live by the simplicity —"

"Oh, shameful!" interrupted Ruby, "and there really seems something cruel in converting an innocent amusement into a very doubtful kind of traffic. Will you take any more wine?"

"Not unless you wish," replied Wilmot.

"Then we will walk together. Waiter! the bill!"

Wilmot proposed to pay for both.

"By no means," said Ruby, smiling and shaking his head reprovably. "Let me warn you against

such generous folly. You will find too many ready to accept your hospitality, and laugh at your simplicity. I speak plainly, because I mean honestly."

"I will not forget the lesson," answered Wilmot as he and his dangerous acquaintance left the room, the latter regarding Wagstaff and Goad as utter strangers. We shall see.

Wagstaff struck his closed hand upon the table, to give vent to his pent-up feelings of admiration.

"A lesser genius," he exclaimed, when the waiter followed "the parting guests," — "a lesser genius would have taken the pot luck; but he has more confidence in Fortune, than to sell her favours for a mess of pottage!"

"Beautiful! his coolness would send the mercury to freezing-point in the dog-days," added Goad. "What a witness he would make to swear to imaginary facts!"

"He's an honour to our profession," continued Wagstaff. "Card or die never ruffled him. I've seen him set a hand for a thousand, and never winked when the thrower nicked him."

"I honour him, Wagstaff!" said Goad. "I feel that my first floor contains a glory when that man is in it. Ah! it was a lucky thing for me when you and Ruby converted my humble dwelling into a private pigeon-house" — and the ugly lawyer chuckled at his own miserable joke. "Dear me!"

he continued, after looking at his watch. "Six o'clock, and I ought to be at Reigate on professional business."

"Reigate! Professional business!" remarked Wagstaff, his eyes twinkling as he spoke. "What have you in that bag? Not a fiddle?"

"A fiddle! No, sir; mine are legal instruments," said Goad, showing a bundle of papers.

"I beg pardon," continued Wagstaff, laughing heartily — not at the lawyer's joke, however, but at some mental picture which presented itself.

"I must tell you what tickles me, Goad. The day before yesterday I went to Reigate, and, as I was sitting in the parlour of the little inn near the station, a loutish fellow came in and asked 'if I was Mr. Fillet, the dancing-master from London?' I don't know what made me answer 'Yes,' but I did so, and learned that a young and pretty girl, wanting instruction in the polka, had written to one of the London advertising dancing-masters to come down to Reigate. I can play a little, so I got the lout to borrow a fiddle from the barber, and I had the honour of giving a first lesson to the prettiest pair of ankles I ever saw in my life. This evening I am again engaged."

"Captain Wagstaff," said Goad, draining the decanter, "I always thought arms was not your *forte*. You see it's legs, evidently legs."

The two friends laughed in concert, and then, Wagstaff having paid for the wine, they went on their way to Reigate.

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CHAPTER II.

THERE was not a household with any pretension to respectability in Reigate, but was in a flutter. Every female of the industrious population that could wield a needle was secured at fabulous prices; and so much business was rushing in and out of the four principal drapers' shops, that Ludgate-hill would have been envious, had it run down to Reigate by rail. Several secret embassies had been despatched to London, and parcels of formidable bulk were known to have been delivered in various directions in and about the town of Reigate. In fact, there was to be an Autumn Race Meeting, and the Stewards, being young men and gallant, had announced that a Race Ball would conclude the week's amusements. A committee had been formed of the leading residents, and great care was being taken to make the matter as respectable as possible.

A short distance out of the town stood the neatest of cottages, nearly overshadowed by a grand old oak tree, which gave a name to the little dwelling. The occupants were scarcely known, living, as they did, a most secluded life; and their servants, not being natives of the locality, little could be learned concern-

ing them by their more curious neighbours. Two female domestics and a man-servant indicated the possession of competency, and their neat pony equipage spoke well for the taste and judgment of those who had selected it. The mistress of the cottage was an elderly lady, who might have been the mother of the beautiful young creature, her companion, but for a certain deference always observable in her bearing towards her. The relation they bore to each other will be explained by what follows.

"What a time Joseph is gone, Mrs. Millar!" said the younger lady (her name was Mary Grey), her beautiful face hidden among the flowers clustered round the open window.

"Really, Mary," replied the lady addressed, "I repent of having given way to this foolish whim of yours. I am afraid your father would not approve of your attending this race ball."

"Nay, dear Milly," said Mary, leaving her seat at the window, and placing her arms round the elder's neck, "my father will approve of anything to which you assent. You know how seldom he visits us — how completely he leaves me to your control. I am now twenty, and have not even seen a ball. Think of that, dear Milly! Before you were my age, I have no doubt, you had seen a hundred. Remember, I am young and foolish, if you will, but I do sometimes think I am like my little canary —

I've a very nice cage, but it often looks sadly like a prison."

"Well, we must talk about it," answered Mrs. Millar, who was evidently not proof against the music of Mary's voice, and which continued —

"We have talked enough about it already, dear Milly, and I am sure you are too kind, and love me too much, to deprive me of this innocent pleasure. Recollect how often I've heard you tell stories of your young days, the pleasant companions you had then, the gay scenes you visited, the pretty dresses you wore, the merry parties you shared — whilst I never see any one but you, except now and then my dear, dear father." She clasped her hands together as she said this, and gazed earnestly at the portrait of a grey-haired man, whose benignant eyes seemed to return the look of love then turned towards them.

"Very true, Mary," replied Mrs. Millar, with a deep sigh; "you must get very tired of me."

"No! no! not tired, dear Milly," said Mary, kissing the calm, passionless face of the speaker, "but *you* look dull enough sometimes; and, then I think, Ah, Milly is recalling the times when she was young, as I am; when she was not shut up in this pretty prison, as I am, but went abroad into the happy world, and shared its happiness, as I do not."

"Very true, Mary," answered Mrs. Millar, evidently

giving way at every word; "I do sometimes wish that you could have more society."

"I know you do! I know you do!" exclaimed Mary, "and therefore you have sent Joseph for those ball tickets, and you intend taking me for once — only for once — to a dance, or why did you send to Mr. Fillet, the London dancing master, to come down and teach me the polka, which I know already — almost?" and, humming a once popular air, she danced round the room, until the bewildered Mrs. Millar exclaimed —

"Oh, Mary, Mary! you make me do wrong in spite of myself! But mind, not a word in any of your letters to your father. I don't like deceit, but I would rather tell him of this silly matter myself."

"You shall do just as you please," said Mary, giving Mrs. Millar such a hearty kiss, that Joe Martin, coming up the garden, was startled by the report.

Joseph, or Joe Martin, was one of those useful compounds of footman, groom, and gardener, which now and then are found in small families. His father was a Sussex man, he believed, and his mother a Yorkshire woman, so no wonder that Joe was a sharp fellow enough.

He came into his present service with a very feeble character, but had proved honest, sober, and industrious, during the three years he had served Mrs. Millar and her pretty ward. For Miss Grey,

Joe entertained a feeling that would have been called love, had he been equal in position to his mistress; and it is difficult to find any other name for the sensation, which had place in the bosom of this serving man.

He felt for her loneliness, and considered it part of his duty to be ready to do battle positively and figuratively, whenever she required a defender. He had laid a lance in rest for her, that very afternoon.

"Well, Joseph, have you got the tickets?" said Mary, as the messenger approached the porch of the cottage.

"Why, no, miss, I've not quite got 'em," replied Joe, with some slight confusion of manner.

"Not quite?" said Mary; "what do you mean by that?"

"Why you see, miss," replied Joe; "I sent Mrs. Millar's note to the Committee, as were sitting at the Blue Lion, and arter waiting about half an 'our, I war tould to walk up-stairs. 'Pray,' says Mr. Committee, 'who be Mrs. Millar? I suppose she be respectable?' 'Of course,' says I. 'She keeps a footman, gardener, and groom,' though I didn't own, that the three individuals was inside this striped waistcoat."

"Well, and what did the fellow say then?" asked Mrs. Millar, with her head erect, and her bosom swelling with indignation.

"Why I ask," says Mr. Committee, "is, because it's not usual for ladies to come unattended to a public ball."

"True!" gasped Mrs. Millar, "I had forgotten that."

"Nor be they comin' unattended, sir," says I; "there be a gentleman comin' wi' them," meaning myseen, miss, tho' I didn't tell them he'd sit in the tap-room till the ball were over."

"Really!" said Mrs. Millar, "I think we must not go."

One glance at Mary, and Joe replied, "O, but you must, ma'am, now! 'cos he has promised to send the tickets to-morrow, and told me to get a pint of ale, and put it down to Committee — which I did, in course."

"Oh, Joseph! I am so much obliged to you," said Mary, "and there's a bright new shilling for you; but mind, our visit to the ball is to be quite a secret. Is it not, Mrs. Millar? Mr. Fillet will be here directly, so I'll go at once and change my walking shoes, and be ready for my lesson." And then, once more embracing Mrs. Millar, and humming the lively air, as she had done before, she danced out of the room, leaving her elderly companion perplexed and silent.

Joe Martin kept the bright shilling in his hand, mentally boring a hole through it, and adding it to the steel watch-key and seal given to him by one

whom he loved in his rough way very dearly. "Things are looking up a bit wi' me at last," thought Joe. "For five years I've been slippin' down in the world as though it were greased all over; but this week folk have been takin' my pocket for a money box. First of all there was Mr. Fillet, the dancing master, dropped half-a-crown, beside another for the lend of the barber's fiddle. If he be a regular purfessional gentleman, I'm another, that's certain. Then to-day comes up a smart young chap and says: 'Do you live at Oak Cottage?' 'Yes,' says I, 'I does.' 'Are your ladies going to the ball?' says he. 'Yes, they be,' says I. 'Thankee,' says he; and so he drops a crown. I've a good mind to go up to Lun'non and open a shop in opposition to the Bank of England." Joe was chuckling at his own pleasant thoughts, when Mr. Fillet, otherwise Captain Wagstaff, turned the corner of the lane.

"The ladies at home, Joe?" said Wagstaff.

"Yes, sir!" — and Joe opened the garden gate.

Wagstaff paused, and looking Joe full in the face, said abruptly: —

"Joe, will you answer me a question for half-a-crown?"

"That depends on the question," replied Joe.

"Well said, Joe. You're sharp for a native. Now tell me who's your mistress?"

"Mrs. Millar. Half-a-crown," replied Joe, holding out his horny hand.

"Sharp again, Joseph," said Wagstaff; "there's the money; and now, my boy, who's the young lady?"

"Be that question half-a-crown too?"

Wagstaff shook his head. "Oh!" continued Joe, "because the answer be."

Wagstaff was not the man to be offended, either at the familiarity or cupidity of Mr. Martin, so, giving Joe some loose silver, he said: —

"Come, I'll trust to your generosity — so tell me, has she any money?"

Joe's doubts concerning Mr. Fillet were strengthened; but he replied: —

"Lots; she gave me a shilling just now."

"And her name?" asked Wagstaff.

"Miss Grey."

"An orphan?" said Wagstaff.

"Only half an orphan," replied Joe, "her father's living, he is a commercial traveller, a bagman, and so if you want to know any more you must ask my missus."

"Why, Joe," said Wagstaff, "you're as close as an oyster."

"Yes, I be close for a native," answered Joe; giving Wagstaff a look that brought the red blood into that gentleman's brazen face.

As Wagstaff entered the cottage, Joe thought he would keep his eye on Mr. Double Shuffle, as he called him, and resolved what he *would* do if his suspicions proved to be correct.

Joe having constituted himself the dragon of this Reigate Hesperides, made his way to the stable, and having fed the ponys, sat down on the cornbin, prepared to do battle at a moment's notice. The sound of the fiddle was quite audible where he sat, and Joe, after drumming for awhile with the heels of his boots on the sides of the chest, became sufficiently inspired to perform a sort of saraband in an empty stall of the stable.

"Very well, indeed, sir, very well indeed!" said our acquaintance of the White Posts, Mr. Goad, peeping in at the stable door; "you'd have made your fortune if dancing bears hadn't gone out of fashion."

"I am sorry they has," replied Joe, who was rarely at loss for an answer, "'cos I could have given you a job as my leader."

"Oh!" said Goad, not relishing the implied compliment. "Witty as well as saltatory, MR. MARTIN." He emphasized the name in the knowing manner assumed by pettifogging attorneys, when trying to catch a witness.

"Mr. Martin?" echoed Joe, somewhat startled by the inquiry.

"Yes, that's your name, is it not, sir?" asked Mr. Goad, screwing his mouth on one side and cocking his eye.

"Well, I never said it wasn't!" replied Joe, evidently puzzled a little.

"Born at Balcombe in Sussex, once servant to

Mrs. Barker," continued Goad, referring to a brief-like bundle of papers. "Right, I believe?"

"Why, if you know all about it, it's no use axing of me," replied Joe, fencing the question, without a doubt.

"One morning, June the 16th, 1851, a silver spoon was missing; June 17th, you were ditto. Eh?" said Goad, screwing his mouth and cocking his eye again, only much harder than before.

"But I didn't steal it, master," exclaimed Joe, dashing his hand down upon the cornbin. "As I've breath I didn't! For five years I've been mucking about the country for fear of that spoon, tho' I know'd no more of it than an unborn baby."

Goad continued to scan his brief, without heeding apparently a word of Joe's defence.

"You committed suicide, I believe!" asked Goad.

"I did," answered Joe.

"In a letter addressed to Mrs. Barker, a circumstance which haunted Mrs. Barker to her dying day," remarked Goad, folding up his brief and depositing it in a capacious blue bag, partly filled with other papers.

"Then why did she accuse me of taking her spoon? That's haunted me, I can tell you, master," said Joe, his lip quivering and his cheek flushing with excitement.

"Joseph Martin—" Goad paused, and tightened the strings of his blue bag, whilst he kept his eye

fixed upon Joe — "Joseph, I am going to present you with 6s. 8d."

Joe could hardly believe his ears.

"Listen. Mrs. Barker is dead, consequently you have nothing to fear on account of the spoon, and that opinion is equal to 6s. 8d."

"Six and eightpence!" cried Joe. "Six hundred pounds! for now I can hold up my head again, like a man."

"And so you shall, if you'll be guided by me," said Goad. "Your fellow-servant at that time was named Susan Fletcher. Could you identify her?"

"No," answered Joe; "for she were innocent, I'll swear."

Goad smiled at Joe's application of the word "identify," and then said, "I know her to be innocent. What I meant was, should you know her again?"

"Know her!" exclaimed Joe; "know her! I should think so, from ten thousand!" for Susan had given him the steel watch-chain years ago.

"Then I can put ten pounds in your pocket, Martin," said Goad. "This is my card, that's my name and address;" they were printed in a fat smudgy type, and had a suspicious appearance; "and if you will be at my house by twelve o'clock to-morrow, you shall have ten pounds."

"Hem! master!" replied Joe, his confidence in himself perfectly restored, "this is all very well;"

and he turned Goad's card about, as though he were examining a bad shilling; "but I don't see any promise to pay on this."

"Those who catch you asleep must get up remarkably early, eh, Mr. Martin?" said Goad. "To show you that I'm in earnest, there's half the money;" and from the recess of an enormous black bill-case the lawyer produced a new bank-note.

Joe received it without a moment's hesitation, and folding it up very carefully (having first looked at the water mark), placed it, with much deliberation, in his watch-fob.

"I may expect you to-morrow now, I conclude," said Goad, with a horrible contortion of features, which he intended for an ingenuous smile.

"I'll be there to a minute, master, rely on it, if only to look after the twin brother of this chap," answered Joe, slapping his pocket.

"Then good day, Joe," said Mr. Goad, throwing his blue bag over his shoulder, and quitting the stable.

"Good day, sir," replied Joe, touching his forelock, "and I wish myself many happy returns of it, for it's the best I've seen for many a hanny dominier."

CHAPTER III.

CAPTAIN WAGSTAFF, in his assumed character of dancing-master, was earnestly engaged with his fair pupil, and the notes of the fiddle were now exchanged for those of the piano, elicited by no very skilful hand, as Mrs. Millar, it must be confessed, had a very indifferent ear for time and tune. The fact was, Wagstaff, with reckless impudence, had induced the old lady to play whilst he danced the figure with the unsuspecting Mary. The innocent girl was much perplexed when her brazen instructor encircled her waist with his arm, and held her small hand within his own, occasionally increasing the pressure in a way which at length alarmed and annoyed her. Wagstaff's boldness increasing with the excitement of the dance, he pressed, almost impalpably, his lips upon her fingers. The outrage made Mary's face crimson, and she instantly disengaged herself from the insolent offender.

"I shall dance no more, sir," she said, seeking protection at Mrs. Millar's side. "Take your fee, sir, at once, and go; I shall dance no more."

Wagstaff was silenced and confounded for a moment. "I have gone too far," thought he. "It is

lucky that I am not dependent on my present profession for a living. Bah! I am not to be put down by a chit like that."

Whilst Wagstaff was fumbling with his fiddle case, Mary briefly conveyed to Mrs. Millar what had occurred, and that feeble-minded but very proper lady instantly bristled up like a Friesland hen.

"There is your fee, Mr. Fillet," said she indignantly; "we will not trouble you to call again."

"Not the least trouble," stammered Wagstaff, more abashed than he had been for years — "not the least trouble, I assure you. I attend several families of distinction in the neighbourhood, and shall have the greatest pleasure in completing Miss Mary's education gratis, ma'am, gratis!" and the bold *roué*, blushing like a rustic novice, turned to go, as Joe Martin appeared at the door in great haste, and announced that "Master" had arrived. In a moment Mary was on her way to the garden-gate to meet her father.

"Oh, dear me! what shall we do?" said Mrs. Millar, conscious that she had not acted quite right in admitting Mr. Fillet, to whom she was now compelled to appeal. "Will you oblige me, sir, by going out this way?" and she opened a door which led into the little stable-yard.

"With pleasure, ma'am," replied Wagstaff, who saw, from Mrs. Millar's confusion, that something was wrong, and, with the meanness of such a man,

determined to profit by his advantage; and so he added, "Then, I may call upon you again?"

"Oh, yes — no, sir — pray go! pray go! or I am ruined!" exclaimed the terrified old lady.

Wagstaff turned to go the way he had been desired, as Mary and her father stood midway on the garden walk, the loving daughter's head resting on the bosom of the loving father. His hat had fallen to the ground, and his grey hair shone like threads of silver in the sun. Wagstaff started, and for a moment appeared lost in wonder.

"Is that the master of this house?" he asked at length, almost in a whisper.

"Yes, it be," said Joe Martin, "and he won't want to see you;" adding, "why don't ye go when you're tould?" and, without further parley, he pushed the astonished Wagstaff into the stable yard.

Mr. Grey was a fine, hale man of about fifty-five. His hair, white and spare, revealed a broad, intelligent-looking forehead. His eye was bright and restless, and his smile had less of mirthfulness than a pleasant satisfaction. He was dressed with scrupulous neatness. A black coat and waistcoat, grey trousers, and short gaiters, seemed to mark the staid man of business; and the full white cravat and large shirt frill indicated that their wearer was not given to change with the fashion of the day.

"And so you are glad to see me?" said Mr. Grey.

"Indeed! indeed, I am!" replied Mary, kissing him again and again. "Why, what a long journey you have had this time! It is five weeks since you left us. I am sure commercial travellers ought to be well paid."

"And I am so, dearest," said her father. "In another month I trust to have done work for the rest of my life."

"And then, father, we shall never be separated?"

"Hum!" said Ruby, with a sad smile. "I would not pledge you to that bargain, in case, Polly, some worthy fellow should ask you to keep house for him."

"La, father!" replied Mary, "how silly you talk!"

"Not so, darling! It would gladden my heart to see you, whom I cherish beyond all else in the world, married to some honest man who would love you as you deserve to be. In the game of life, Mary, HEARTS ARE THE BEST TRUMPS," said the old man, with a sigh.

"I want no one to love me but you," rejoined Mary; "no one!"

"Nonsense! nonsense!" said her father. "Do you think that I, who have been deprived by toil and anxiety of the happiness of your childhood, do not look forward to my darling's darlings creeping about

my knees, speaking to me words in which there is no mistrust, and leading me to forget the selfishness of men in the confiding simplicity of children?"

He kissed her; for his tone had been very sad, and there were tears in Mary's eyes.

"Now let us be merry! Merry? zounds we will be happy as the day is long, before the year is out. In the morning you shall make my breakfast; then, in summer, we will sit in the porch, and you shall read the paper to me, the state of the odds, the —"

"The *what*, father?" asked Mary.

"The — the state of the country," answered Ruby, a slight flush tinting his face; "and then we will ramble in the green lanes and hear the merry birds sing as they used to do, when I was a happy boy — happy and innocent," he muttered.

The last words did not reach Mary's ear, and she continued: —

"On winter evenings, father, we will sit around the fire, and you shall tell me stories of what you have seen and done." Ruby started, as though he had been pricked by a sharp sword. "And then sometimes, just now and then, you shall take me to London."

"No! not to London," said Ruby vehemently, and rising from the rustic seat, on which he had been resting. "Once free, I never set foot again within that dreadful city."

Mary was alarmed and surprised, at her father's

violence. When he perceived the effect his words had produced, he laughed aloud, and said: —

“And so, I have frightened you, by my earnestness; I only meant to say, that in London, everybody is miserable, if they would only own it. Real happiness cannot exist in a city — there is too much to excite envy and discontent. Don't think that fine feathers make fine birds — gay attire is vanity's mourning for a dead heart. No, no! we'll live in the country, my child, and enjoy Nature, before man has tried to improve it. Come, let us go in. I declare, this sniff of country air has made me anxious for my supper.” And, so, leaning on his daughter's arm, the loving father and the innocent girl, passed out of the little garden.

How treacherous are outward appearances! Few would have recognised in Mr. Grey the professed gambler, Robert Ruby. It was he, however.

Nineteen years before the time of our story, a dying woman lay in a prettily decorated room of a small villa in the suburbs of London. The hired nurse was sleeping in a chair beside the bed, and, in a cot near her, an infant was asleep also. The clocks of the surrounding churches struck three; and the booming of the bells seemed to strike upon the heart of the poor sufferer; for she pressed her hand upon her side, and tried to raise herself from her pillow. Vainly, vainly! for the hand of death held her down.

"Nurse!" she said — so feebly that it was strange that the sleeping woman was aroused by her voice — "Nurse, open the window, please, and see if Robert is in the street."

"My dear ma'am! I will do so if you wish it; but it is only three o'clock, and Mr. Grey seldom favours us with his company so early," replied the nurse, with a sneer.

"Hark!" said the sick woman, "I am sure I hear his footstep! Yes! that is his step, I am certain. He stops — I hear him opening the door. Nurse, do not let him go to his own room without seeing me, for I feel to-night will be my last."

"Oh, nonsense, ma'am," replied the nurse. "You'll see many more nights and days too, if you'd leave off fretting about" — she went out on the landing — "this brute of a husband."

Mr. Grey received his wife's message, and said —

"How could Mary imagine that I should have passed her door without seeing her?"

He entered the room as he was speaking, and then went to the bed and bent over his sick wife. She put her arms around his neck, and clasping her hands together, pressed his face closely to her own, kissing him.

"Robert, sit down, dear; and nurse, please leave us together for a few minutes."

The sick woman's orders were obeyed.

"Robert, husband, dear, dear husband," the in-

valid began; "I am so glad you have returned, for in another hour I should not have had power to tell you all that is resting on my heart. Don't speak, dear, but listen to me once and for ever. Robert, four months ago I learned — *how* must be the only secret I ever hid from you — the dreadful trade you follow. Hush! I know all."

Grey could not look longer at her pallid face, but turned away his head, still holding her feverish hand in his.

"Robert, forgive what I am about to say (for I do not speak to reproach you), but for the sake of our child — of that sleeping angel by your side. Kiss me, Robert, dear, and then I will go on. And now hear what I have to say, and treasure up my words in your heart. I shall not live to see another night such as this has been, and such as many have been before — watching, watching the whole night through — but watching patiently so long as I believed that you were not — that you were not —" She could not utter the words which rested on her tongue.

"You guess what I would say; press my hand if I need not recall the past. Ah! well! Robert, you have told me that you have striven with the fatal love of play, and yielded; though you knew it had reduced a noble gentleman down, down to a knavish trickster, and broken the heart that loved you — loved you too well to know of your dishonour, and

live. I do not ask you to promise again to abandon your wretched pursuit. Ah, yes! you would promise, as you have done before; but where I am going the truth is known, and perhaps the angels know it also. Robert, dear husband — dearer at my death than ever — only promise this — promise that our child shall be kept apart from your wicked life, that she shall have another home than yours, where no knowledge of her father's crime can ever reach her; for children learn and remember strange matters often. Promise this; perform this; and in His own good time, perhaps — perhaps — Oh, promise!"

Exhausted by her effort, her head fell upon her shoulder; and when her wretched husband, wretched every way, uttered the words, "I promise, Mary," her spirit passed away as she was smiling.

The unconscious babe so left and cared for was Mary Grey.

whom Mr. Good had referred in the preceding chapter, and who was now engaged in ironing at the window. Susan, as she pursued her work, appeared to be full of thought; and as story tellers have strange privileges, we will put the substance of her incubations into words. "Dear me!" she thought; "what a dreadful thing it is to have such an easy place as I have. I like work — downright hard work!" and here she emphasized her expression by banging the iron down

CHAPTER IV.

IN one of the streets leading out of St. James's Street resided Mr. Goad. There was a dingy look about the place that made the passer-by, who regarded it, melancholy for the moment, and those who contemplated it from the opposite side of the way, strongly of opinion that it was a human spider's web from attic to parlour. We except the kitchen, because a cheerful voice might now and then be heard singing some old country ditty in the depths of the area, and a bright buxom face might also be seen looking up to the sky through the well-cleaned kitchen windows. The owner of cheerful voice and buxom face was no other than Susan Fletcher, to whom Mr. Goad had referred in the preceding chapter, and who was now engaged in ironing at the window. Susan, as she pursued her work, appeared to be full of thought; and as story tellers have strange privileges, we will put the substance of her lucubrations into words.

"Dear me!" she thought; "what a dreadful thing it is to have such an easy place as I have. I like work — downright hard work!" and here she emphasized her expression by banging the iron down

upon the table — “but here I have nothing to do but cook my own dinner, and keep the place tidy. Mr. Goad never dines at home, the boy sweeps out the office, and Mr. Ruby, the lodger up stairs, hires a char-woman to do his work. And yet what pains Mr. Goad took to find me out. There’s something very mysterious about it — very!” and Susan, leaving the iron to cool, folded her hands and sat down on the table. But only for a moment, as she started from her seat, her rosy face changing to the hue of death; and all because a passer-by sang, in a loud rough way, —

“It was as young Coddlin, ear-ly one morn,
Went whistling along thro’ the fieldes of corn.”

“Oh! if ghosts had ever been known to sing,” said Susan, half aloud, “I could have sworn that that was Joe’s voice!” And the singer, repassing, sang on, —

“And then she smil-ed, like to any doove,
And did consent, all for to be his loove.”

“It must be Joe,” cried Susan, running to the window — “yet it can’t be he, ’cos he committed suicide — and yet, there he is, nodding his head — and — coming down the area steps!”

It was Joe in the flesh, sure enough, as no one would have doubted who heard the five or six hearty kisses he gave Susan’s glowing cheeks, and justified the conclusion at which she arrived, that her old lover was not dead after all.

"No, Susey," said Joe, "mine was only a case of suspended animation. As Mrs. Barker would have it that I had stolen that spoon, I thought I'd better die and bury mysen', than be taken up and transported. But it's all right now, Mr. Goad says, and he gave me ten pounds to come to London, and make mysen' genteel and conspicuous, and I think I've done it." Joe was perfectly right; he had done it, by the purchase of the gaudiest of waistcoats, the brightest of green coats, and a breast pin of remarkable splendour, its brilliancy mitigated, however, by the satin stock into which it was inserted. He fairly dazzled Susan's eyes as she gazed upon him, with the admiration of a woman's first love. When she had satisfied her eyes, she naturally inquired the reason for Mr. Goad's extraordinary liberality.

"I'm come up to 'dentify you," replied Joe; and seeing poor Susan turn pale at the announcement, he added also, "He means nought to harm you, Susey, but he's got some scheme in his head, and his head's as long as the Thames Tunnel, which I saw yesterday. However, you can get through *that*, if you've luck and patience." This pleasant announcement and beautiful metaphor re-assured Susan, and so, having turned the various articles airing on the clothes-horse before the fire, she invited Joe to take some refreshment, announcing, with commendable independence, that she was on board wages, and kept her own larder.

"Well, I'll not say no," answered Joe, "for somehow or t'other, whatever I want beside, I never want an appetite."

"That's a small bit of cheese, Joey," said Susan, as she placed a section of a Dutch Bolus on the table. "I don't have much at a time, as I've nobody to help me eat it." — (Artful Susan.)

"That's a melancholy thing to say," observed Joe, taking Susan's plump hand in his own, "but it's very easy to remedy it. It's my belief that men and women are like gloves — they're no use except in pairs."

"O Joe!" exclaimed Susan, "you always was so poetical; it's as good as a Valentine to hear you talk."

"Much better," said Joe, "because I speak sincere and honest. I don't tell you my heart's a roasting on the altar of love. No, — but I says I have saved £15 10s. 0d., and am able to take care of a horse, look after a garden, and wait at table. Them's arguments as sound like getting a livelihood," and the orator ventured to put his arm round the substantial waist of his auditor.

"And I'm not without a penny," said Susan, with pardonable pride. "I've got £12, besides a tea-caddy and a pair of silver sugar-tongs."

"Come!" cried Joe, "this is courting in earnest" (and we quite agree with him). "I'll speak to my

old missus in the country, and if she don't forbid the banns, I'll ———"

The voice of Mr. Goad, calling Susan, brought Joe's protestation to an untimely end, and caused him to inquire with much earnestness —

"Will he come down here?"

"Very likely," replied Susan.

"Then hide me somewhere," said Joe. "He promised me another £5 if I wouldn't come after you. Where's this go?" pointing to a door.

"You can't go there; that leads up to the lodger's room. There, go behind the clothes-horse."

Joe obeyed, but the bright, blazing fire made him remark that he should be done as brown as a gipsy if Goad stopped long.

Susan resumed her work, although her iron was not half so hot as poor Joe was destined to be, and Mr. Goad entered the kitchen, carrying with him his blue bag, from which he was supposed never to part, not even when a-bed.

"Ah, Susan!" said Mr. Goad, in the cheeriest of tones, "busy, busy, as usual! You are a good girl, and an excellent servant."

"Thank you, sir," answered Susan, modestly; "I've not much to do to prove that."

"Oh, yes! oh, yes!" said Goad. "Susan, sit down; I want to talk to you."

"Going to sit down and talk!" thought Joe; "if they do, I shall want basting."

Susan, however, did as she was bid; for she was too flustered to think of the fiery ordeal to which Joe was subjected.

"Susan," said Mr. Goad, "what I am about to say to you may appear strange, but you must only blame your own pretty face." A fresh supply of coals could not have warmed Joe more than those few words of Mr. Goad.

"How old are you, Susan?" asked the master.

"Three and twenty," faltered the maid.

"Next grass," thought Joe; for he knew her age to an hour almost.

"And still single!" continued Mr. Goad, with a ludicrous expression of astonishment. His voice fell to a whisper, as he added, "You must not continue so. You have known me some time; I am not ill-tempered, not ill-looking" (Joe differed in opinion).

"I have a good position in society, and can make you a lady. I am a man of few words; will you marry me?" An entire chaldron of inflammable emotions blazed within the bosom of Joe Martin.

"You marry me, sir!" asked Susan, rising from her chair, and looking wildly towards the clothes-horse, as though she expected her tortured lover to burst from his purgatory. "I'm only a servant. I — I should make you ashamed of my want of manners and learning."

"No, no!" exclaimed Goad. "I will have you instructed. You shall be my pride! my glory! A

four-wheeled chaise! a boy in livery! your own mistress! a perpetual Sunday out!" How long he would have continued in this incoherent strain, or whether he would have ever come to a conclusion, we know not, had not Trotter, the office boy, run down the stairs to announce that "Mr. Ruby wanted to speak to Mr. Goad;" and was terribly frightened when his master seized him by the collar, and exclaimed, "Miscreant! how dare you intrude at such a moment?"

"Because Mr. Ruby sent me," replied the boy; "he's in the front office, and in a great hurry."

Mr. Ruby was not a client to be neglected, and so, fortunately for Joe Martin, Mr. Goad followed Trotter to the office, promising to return immediately.

"He's just gone in time!" exclaimed the half-roasted Joe, rushing from his concealment. "Just in time; I couldn't have stood it any longer. What with a raging fire behind me, and a burning rage within me, I should have blazed out in a minute. Well, Susan Fletcher!" he added, as loud as he could bawl, "what do you mean to do?"

"La, Joe!" answered Susan; "don't shout at me in that way!"

"Don't shout! I understand. You want to pick a quarrel with me!" cried Joe, jealousy giving him a poke up.

"I want no such thing," said Susan. "There

go and take a walk in the area, and cool yourself, do. I'm sure I was never more surprised in my life."

"What's his motive?" asked Joe. "What's he want to marry you for?"

Well, Susan might have excused him for that presumption.

"Ah, here's his bag of combustibles!" — Goad had really left his bag upon the table, and Joe did not hesitate to inspect its contents.

"What's this? — a newspaper — *The Times*; and here's a 'vertisement scored round with ink, and your name, 'Susan Fletcher.'"

"My name?"

"Yes."

And Joe read as follows: —

IF SUSAN FLETCHER, formerly servant to Mrs. Barker, will apply to Mr. Goad, Solicitor, she will hear of something to her advantage.

"It was through seeing that in the paper that I came here," said Susan.

Joe dived again into the bag, and brought out "The Will of Jane Barker, widow."

"Mother Barker's Will," exclaimed Joe. "I see it now, she's left you a legacy." As he spoke, he loosened the red tape tied round the paper, and, having cast his eyes over the contents, read out to the astonished Susan: —

"And I, Jane Barker, having done a great wrong to Susan Fletcher, by accusing her of robbery, and thereby destroying her character, do hereby will and bequeath to her one thousand pounds."

Susan could only exclaim "Joe!" and then fall, solidly, on to a chair.

"Don't faint now, wait till I have done," said Joe, "for here some'ut about me." "Also the sum of ten pounds, for a tombstone for Joseph Martin, who unfortunately killed himself from the same cause. Had he been living, I would also have provided for him." "There's an ungrateful old woman! Why didn't she leave it to my executors, and I'd have proved as my own next o' kin?"

"This accounts for Mr. Goad's wish to marry me," said Susan. "What shall I do, Joe?"

"Do!" replied Joe, who ought to have been a verger in the temple of Themis. "Do! Let me take these papers to a lawyer, whilst you pack up your box, and be ready to leave this place to-night. Now you're an heiress, you bean't safe a moment. Goad's just the man to hire ruffians, and carry you off in the middle of the night, and marry you with a pistol at your head! You're not safe till you're Mrs. Joe Martin."

This advice was so much in accordance with Susan's own inclination (when did a woman ever doubt the man she loved? and Susan had long loved Joe), that she promised to pack up forthwith, and

entreated Joe to return directly, in case anything dreadful should happen.

Joe, taking the will and the newspaper, and giving Susan a kiss, for which Mr. Goad would gladly have paid 6s. 8d., he bade her call murder, if her master ventured to speak to her, and give him in charge of the police. Joe then hastened away to consult with the landlord of the public-house where he had passed the night, as to obtaining the legal assistance he required.

CHAPTER V.

MR. RUBY had not waited for Goad in the office, but gone to his own apartments, whither the latter followed him. The rooms which Ruby occupied opened into each other, and were divided by curtains instead of doors. In the front one there was a larger loo-table than is usually found in similar lodgings, and the back room had four card-tables, on which were placed lamps with green shades.

Without exchanging the usual salutations, Ruby at once asked Goad if he had seen Captain Wagstaff, and was told that he would be with them presently.

"Remember," said Ruby, "to-day he is to appear as your friend, or young Wilmot will wonder, as we have often seen the captain about town, that I did not introduce him." So it was evident that the old hawk and the young pigeon had been much together.

"You have ordered dinner at seven?" said Ruby.

"Yes, sir, and I flatter myself that you will approve of my catering. I have explained to Wag-

staff the object of our meeting, and he is delighted. I hope you will find me an apt pupil."

"I do not doubt it," answered Ruby. "I fancy your conscience is as elastic as my own."

"It" is india-rubber, "sir," said Goad, with a chuckle. "Conscience was only intended for man in his primitive condition, and is not adapted to a high state of civilization."

"Perhaps so," observed Ruby, thoughtfully; and then asked, "Any letter for Mr. Grey?"

"No, sir," said Goad, smiling wickedly; "I have not seen that crow-quill hand these six days."

Ruby walked to the window, and was silent.

"What can be the reason Mary has not written to me?" he thought. "I must steal an hour to-morrow, and visit her. Can she be ill? No; to-day I must not think of her."

At that moment Trotter announced Captain Wagstaff, and Goad retired to prosecute his love affair in the kitchen. Susan was not there, however; so taking his blue bag from the table, he returned to his other avocations in the office.

"Ah, Wagstaff?" said Ruby, shaking that worthy by the hand, "it seems an age since we met."

"It is more than a fortnight," Wagstaff replied, laughing; "but great occasions require great sacrifices."

"True," said Ruby, "and I have had that in hand which will repay us for our privations. I have

ascertained by a shilling and Doctors' Commons that young Wilmot is entitled to twenty thousand pounds, although at present he is not over-burthened with ready money."

"So much the better," said Wagstaff, "he will be the easier involved, and then, like a limed bird, the more he struggles to get free, the more embarrassed he will become."

Ruby paused for a minute, and then said—

"I am sorry for him. Somehow or the other, the fellow has obtained a hold upon me, for which I cannot account."

Wagstaff was somewhat surprised at this observation from his old confederate, and could only observe in reply, "But business is business, you know."

"True," answered Ruby, shaking off any momentary compunction; "true, we play the game of life in little. Ignorance puts down the stake, and experience wins it. Goad has told you our plans for to-night. Wilmot must not be alarmed by too great a loss."

Wagstaff agreed with this suggestion.

"Well," continued Ruby, "what have you been doing since we parted?"

"Very little that has been profitable," replied Wagstaff; "I have passed"—and he fixed his eye upon Ruby as he spoke—"I have passed most of my time at Reigate."

Ruby had been standing at the window, looking

out upon the street. He now turned round suddenly, and almost exclaimed —

“Reigate?”

“A charming spot,” said Wagstaff, not appearing to notice Ruby’s voice or manner; “do you know it?”

“Why, yes,” replied Ruby, turning his face again to the street, “I have been there.”

“I’ve a remarkable love of nature,” continued Wagstaff, lighting a cigar, “human nature particularly; and the women of Reigate are models for a Canova.”

Ruby affected to laugh, as he said, “And so — and so you have been love-making, I presume?”

“Why, yes — slightly,” answered Wagstaff. “As you turn down the lane — but you don’t know Reigate?”

“I do — yes, I do!” said Ruby, a vague terror stealing over him.

“Well, then, perhaps you remember,” continued Wagstaff, coolly puffing his cigar as he went on — “perhaps you remember a pretty little place called Oak Cottage” (Ruby started), “and which contains two inmates, a middle-aged lady, and a charming creature just ripening into womanhood?”

Ruby instantly faced Wagstaff. “What of her?” was all he could utter.

Wagstaff broke into a loud laugh, whilst Ruby

could scarcely keep himself from falling. "Ha, ha! Sir Reynard, have I found your earth at last? By Jove! I envy you your good fortune. I saw you — looking as though fresh from Exeter Hall — creep into that bower of roses. Be not ashamed, man! You have an excellent excuse for your folly. I saw her rush into your arms, and" —

"Stop!" said Ruby, almost choking with emotion. "If you have seen this, you have misapprehended what you saw. She is my daughter."

Wagstaff shook his head, despite the terrible earnestness of Ruby.

"I swear it — my daughter. I have often stood your friend, Fred.; now stand you mine. Never speak of what you saw. That girl is dearer to me than life. A light word must not be coupled with her name."

"And she your daughter!" said Wagstaff, now convinced that Ruby was speaking the truth.

"I know your thoughts!" continued Ruby. "You wonder that one so good, so pure, should be the child of Robert Ruby. She knows not what I am. She has been kept apart, as spotless as when her mother died, and left her to my care."

The hardened gambler sat down, and covered his face with his hands, the tears welling through his fingers.

It was now Wagstaff's turn to walk to the window. For a few moments the distress of his old

confederate touched him; and then his thoughts took a selfish direction, and he considered how he might turn this knowledge to his own advantage. "Ruby is rich," he thought, "and will be richer. The girl is pretty and good. What if I were to marry her?"

Ruby had sustained his double character too many years to be long over-mastered by his feelings; and so, joining Wagstaff at the window, he laid one hand upon his shoulder, and offered the other, saying —

"You *will* keep my secret, eh, Fred.? and if so, count upon me as a friend in any emergency."

Wagstaff took the proffered hand, and replied, "Ruby, I am as dumb as an oyster — but — did it ever occur to you that, should anything happen to you, your daughter would be in a deuce of a fix?"

"Often! often!" said Ruby; "and I shudder when I think so."

"Then why don't you find her a husband?" asked Wagstaff. "That never occurred to you, eh? Let me find her one."

Ruby turned away impatiently, saying, "No! no! let us talk on some other subject."

"Well, but you don't know the man I would propose," said Wagstaff.

"Mary married to such as we are," muttered Ruby; "I would rather see her in her grave."

"Ruby!" continued Wagstaff, "are you attending to me? The man I would propose is no other than Fred. Wagstaff."

Ruby faced his questioner, and his eyes glared like those of a roused tiger. Wagstaff did not notice him, but went on: —

"I'm the only fellow I know worthy of her — I'll keep her like a lady. You know I stand as well as any man in the ring. I'm pretty fairly off. I'm partner in two houses in St. James's, and half owner of the best horse of the day. Come! say done, and I'll call you father-in-law in a week."

Ruby walked up to Wagstaff, and looking him steadily in the face said, in a tone scarcely above a whisper, "You marry my child! — you, that I know by every name that honest men use to designate a scoundrel!"

"Hallo!" cried Wagstaff.

Ruby heeded him not, but went on: — "Gambler! blackleg! cheat! — and dare you propose to make my innocent Mary your wife? You are mad!"

"Well!" said the astonished Wagstaff, "this is cool! And pray what is Mr. Ruby, that I should bring disgrace upon him?"

"What am I? Doubly the knave I have described you to be. You cannot paint me blacker than I know myself to be; but Mary has been kept in ignorance of my evil life. She does not even

know me by the name of Ruby. No! Wagstaff! no! it is not such as you must call my Mary wife."

"Indeed!" said Wagstaff.

"Yes, indeed!" retorted Ruby.

Wagstaff's face became almost black with anger, as the old man walked from room to room, and it was some minutes before either could master the evil spirits which had taken possession of them. Ruby was the first to do so.

"Forget this meeting, Wagstaff," he said. "Come! let us be friends. We have a golden game to play to-night, and must be cool and confident. Forget what has passed! Forget it!" and exhausted by this conflict of passion and feeling he threw himself upon the sofa.

Wagstaff made no reply; but lighting another cigar, smoked in silence. "Forget it!" he thought. "Not whilst I've breath in my body. 'Cheat! gambler! blackleg!' — those are words to be forgotten! — and from him too! If his girl were an angel he couldn't think more of her."

The fiend in his bad heart spoke louder.

"If I could hit him through her! that would be a revenge." He referred to his watch. "Twelve o'clock, and we don't dine till seven." He rose up and looked at his old confederate in many a nefarious scheme, crouched upon the sofa, and felt more remorseless. "Forget this meeting? No! old boy, we'll play double or quits, if I live!"

The man thus silently apostrophized lay motionless, as though asleep.

"Well! good day, Ruby," said Wagstaff, aloud; "we meet at dinner."

A voice unlike that of the bold gamester, for it was as soft as a woman's, answered — "Good day — forget this quarrel;" yet it was Robert Ruby that spoke.

CHAPTER VI.

THE soft south wind stole through the flowers in the windows, which kept out the mid-day sun from the little parlour of Oak Cottage, wherein were seated Mrs. Millar and Mary Grey, in peaceful contrast to the scene we have just described. Mrs. Millar was sewing, whilst opposite to her sat Mary, reading one of those never-tiring volumes of Walter Scott. Suddenly she paused, although there was nothing in the passage which she had just read to justify her evident emotion. Even dear, dull Mrs. Millar observed the sudden change, and said:

"Are you not well, Mary?"

"Dear Milly, you must excuse me," replied her ward. "I cannot read this morning; my mind is ill at ease. I know not why it should be so, but for this last week I have felt so unhappy."

"Ever since that Race Ball. Eh, Mary?" said Mrs. Millar. "I have observed it with much uneasiness, and blamed myself for taking you there."

"Oh, do not say that, dear Milly," replied Mary; "I never spent such a happy night in all my life. The music was so exhilarating, the dancing so exciting, and Mr. Wilmot so kind and attentive ——"

"That you have never had him out of your head since," interposed Mrs. Millar.

Mary instantly fell upon her knees, and hid her face in Mrs. Millar's lap, saying, in the sweetest tone —

"Oh, Milly!"

"I am right, then?" asked that perplexed lady.

"I fear so, indeed," replied Mary, slowly raising her beautiful eyes to the face of her questioner.

"Every day, on some pretext or other, he has visited us, until I have learned to watch for his coming — to feel that in his presence only I am happy."

"Good gracious, Mary!" exclaimed Mrs. Millar; "I had no idea you were in love. We must put a stop to this."

"I know not how, dear Milly," said Mary, with a sad smile; "I strive to banish him from my thoughts, but neither my flowers nor my books have power to do so."

"Oh, you must, Mary!" exclaimed Mrs. Millar; "I wouldn't have you in love without your father's consent for the world. You must forget him."

"Must!" and Mary sighed as she spoke. "What an easy word to speak! What a difficult one to obey! You have loved, Milly; I am sure you have, and must remember how impossible compliance with such a command would have been then."

Mrs. Millar was driven into a corner, so she said —

"That's quite a different matter. Very true, I did love, dearly love, poor John Millar, but ——"

"And, therefore, you will counsel me, dear Milly. You will speak to me as a friend — as a woman, and not as a school-mistress? You will let me talk to you of him?"

"No, no!" said Mrs. Millar, the tears trickling down her cheek.

"Ah, yes!" cried Mary, trusting those watery witnesses of Mrs. Millar's sympathy, rather than her spoken words. "You will; for my heart is so full at times, that silence is painful to me, and I long to tell you all I feel and hope."

"Don't talk to me in that way," said Mrs. Millar, fairly breaking down. "You will make me do as you like, in spite of myself. And, as I live, here comes Mr. Wilmot! Bother the fellow!"

Mary was on her feet in an instant. A moment's glance at the looking-glass, and then her book was resumed. Oh, foolish Mary!

Wilmot was soon at the door, his fine face glowing with his walk in the warm sun. He carried a fly-rod in his hand, his creel was slung at his back; and a more dangerous fellow, where maidens' hearts were to be had, could hardly be found in broad England — much less in Reigate.

Mrs. Millar intended to have received him in the porch, but, staying to arrange her cap, he was already in the room.

"I am fortunate, indeed," he said, "to find you at home this lovely day. I trust you and Miss Grey are well?"

"Quite well! quite well, I thank you," replied Mrs. Millar, terribly nervous, whilst Mary said nothing, but smiled him a smile that was worth a whole dictionary of words.

"I have killed a brace of trout this morning," said Wilmot, "and venture to ask permission to leave them here."

Mrs. Millar felt she must defend her position at once, or be carried by storm; so, giving a short cough, to rally her retreating spirits, she said, with much emphasis —

"Really, Mr. Wilmot, I must decline your politeness, and, indeed, to be plain with you —" She paused for a moment, and Wilmot thrust in —

"Am I so unhappy as to have given you offence?"

"No, Mr. Wilmot, not offence; but your calling so frequently, your attentions —"

"I acknowledge my intrusions, and plead for forgiveness. If you deny me the pleasure of visiting you, you will inflict pain upon me beyond endurance;" and he certainly looked most wretched.

Mary did not speak, but her face expressed clearly the distress she felt, and Mrs. Millar knew she was upbraiding her for her cruelty.

Wilmot saw his advantage, and recognised his ally.

"If I dared hope that Miss Grey were not offended," said the wily wooer; "that she does not desire my absence —"

Unconsciously, almost, Mary answered what appeared to be a question addressed directly to herself.

"I—I do not, sir; but Mrs. Millar thinks — thinks —"

"That I have some unworthy motive in desiring your regard?" said Wilmot.

"No, sir; I don't care about your motive," answered Mrs. Millar, almost driven distracted. "I believe you, sir, to be a good, kind young man."

"Then do not discard me," urged Wilmot. "Do not think the interest I feel for that lady is less earnest because of its sudden growth."

"What shall I do? What shall I do?" cried Mrs. Millar, wringing her hands.

Wilmot felt he had no right to give pain by his further importunity.

"Pardon me," he said, "I see that I distress you. I am wrong to do so. Must I say farewell?"

"No!" exclaimed Mary, involuntarily, adding immediately — "excuse me if I seem bold, but I am not used to dissemble what I feel, and why should

I hesitate to confess my gratitude for all your kindness?"

"Mary!" cried Mrs. Millar, "you shock, you alarm me!"

"Why, dear madam?" asked Mary, her beautiful face and neck suffused by the effort she was making. "Mr. Wilmot knows how ignorant I am of the world, and the world's ways, and will pardon, what may be, my unmannerly sincerity."

"I will imitate your frankness," said Wilmot, exultingly, "and say how much my happiness depends on your favour."

Mrs. Millar grew more alarmed, expecting to see her ward carried off bodily.

"I can't allow any more of this!" she exclaimed, "without the knowledge of your father."

"True, dear Milly," said Mary; "I thank you for recalling me to my duty. Without my father's permission, Mr. Wilmot, we must not meet again."

"Then let me see him," replied Wilmot. "Let me satisfy him that I am some way worthy to aspire to the happiness I covet."

"Mr. Wilmot!" exclaimed Mrs. Millar, tears trickling down her face. "You are a man! If I do seem harsh and tyrannical, it's quite against my nature. Mary, let Mr. Wilmot see your father?"

"Yes," said Mary, blushing again, as she asked "where?"

"At his place in town," answered Mrs. Millar. "His letters are sent to his lawyer, Mr. Goad, in Chudleigh Street, St. James's."

"Indeed!" said Wilmot. "I have a friend living at Mr. Goad's, and if you will entrust me with your letter, I may obtain an interview this evening."

"I will, Mr. Wilmot," replied Mary; "and upon the result of that interview depends our future — friendship. You promise that?"

"I do."

"In a few minutes my letter will be ready. Mrs. Millar will give it to you."

Wilmot advanced towards Mary as she rose to leave the room, but Mrs. Millar seemed to think matters had proceeded far enough, and led Mary away.

Wilmot stood gazing at the closed doorway through which she had passed, as though he believed she would come again to wish him good-speed on the errand which might concern all their future lives; but she came not. Strange that he should know so near a connexion of Mr. Grey as his confidential lawyer, and that he should be going to his house that night to meet Mr. Ruby for the last time; for, despite his apparent disinterested civility, Wilmot mistrusted his friend of the White Posts.

Mrs. Millar soon returned with Mary's letter, which she gave to Wilmot, a letter that was to

exercise such powerful influence on the fate of nearly all the personages of this story.

When Wilmot left the cottage, Mary returned to the little parlour, and watched him from behind her flowers, as he passed down the garden walk, and then up the lane. She saw him look back many times, as though he felt the influence of her presence, and could not depart. He was gone at last.

Mary had never been so happy before. She knew not why, but perhaps she was conscious that she had overcome a pleasant temptation, and discharged her duty to her beloved father.

Wilmot had been gone half-an-hour, when Mrs. Millar was startled, whilst gathering flowers in the garden, by the advent of "that odious Mr. Fillet," as she and Mary now designated Captain Wagstaff. Mrs. Millar saw him coming down the lane, and instantly sought shelter in the house. Unfortunately Joe Martin was away, as we know; and therefore she felt that Mary and herself were entirely at the mercy of the impudent dancing-master. With his easy *nonchalant* manner, Wagstaff followed Mrs. Millar into the cottage; and, though neither of the ladies made the least sign of friendly recognition, he was perfectly unabashed, and said, smiling impudently, —

"Ah, ladies! You see I have not forgotten my engagement."

Mrs. Millar was determined to close the inter-

view at once, and so replied with an energy most unusual —

“Mr. Fillet, I can but express my surprise that you should intrude yourself here. As a dancing-master we received you — as a dancing-master we paid you.”

“There it is, madam,” said the imperturbable Wagstaff, “there it is! I am desirous of putting myself right with you. That young lady has created an interest —”

“Do not insult me, sir,” said Mary, her beautiful eyes brilliant with indignation.

“I should do so had I no other credentials to your favourable consideration than a fiddle; but I have imposed upon you,” said Wagstaff. “You have hitherto known me but as Mr. Fillet, a cutter of capers, but I am Captain Wagstaff of Her Majesty’s service.”

“In either character,” replied Mary, “your presence here is an intrusion. No honourable man descends to practise deception. I am surprised you are not abashed at your own meanness.”

“Hey-day,” said Wagstaff, rather taken aback by Mary’s plain speaking. “I see you are your father’s daughter. You have all the spirit of ‘Old Ruby.’”

“My father’s name is Grey, sir,” replied Mary.

“Alias Ruby,” said Wagstaff, his anger rising at the contemptuous tone and look of Mary. “I know

him well — better than you do. A fortnight ago he entered this house as I left it.”

“Yes, I remember he did so,” replied Mary, very coolly. “You now know that I am the daughter of an honourable man, who will not allow me to be insulted with impunity.”

“An honourable man?” cried Wagstaff, forcing a laugh. “Ha! ha! Old Bob Ruby — the gambler, blackleg, cheat!”

“What, sir?” exclaimed Mary. “You do not know my father.”

Wagstaff’s face assumed the devilish appearance it had worn in the morning during his quarrel with Ruby, as he almost hissed out —

“When next you see your father, ask him if I have maligned him? Ask him if he knows Fred. Wagstaff, the confederate in many of his clever schemes. This very day he told me you were ignorant of his real name and character. He has used bitter words to me — as bitter as those which have but now fallen from your own lips. A worm will turn when trodden on. You both have spurned me on the strength of your presumed goodness. Ask him if what I have said be true — ‘No honourable man would practise deception.’ If he be one he will tell you, as he but lately told me, that he is known by every name that honest men despise.”

Wagstaff’s brutal harangue was brought to a close by Mary falling senseless to the ground, and

Mrs. Millar thrusting him from the room, as she exclaimed —

“Coward! Leave my house! Coward, coward!”

Wagstaff took his way to the lane, Mrs. Millar’s words ringing in his ears long after he left the garden.

Mary soon recovered, and looking wildly around, asked, like one who had seen some frightful object — “Is he gone?”

“Yes, dear,” replied Mrs. Millar. “Villain that he is!”

“Oh, what has he done? what has he done?” cried Mary, hiding her face in her hands. “Left me with distrust of my own father;” then checking herself, she rose up, and wiping the tears from her eyes, continued, “Oh, wicked girl that I am, to doubt one so kind, so loving, on the word of such a villain. ‘Gambler! cheat!’ the words sound in my ears, as though uttered by a thousand tongues. I cannot rest here, dear Milly, we will go to London at once, and see my father.”

“My dear child,” said Mrs. Millar, alarmed at the earnestness of Mary’s voice and manner, “wait till to-morrow.”

“It is useless to dissuade me,” replied Mary; “either go with me, or I go alone. Did I remain here, I should not see another day with unshaken reason. Are you decided? Do we go together?”

“Yes, Mary, yes!” said the bewildered Mrs.

Millar. "This all comes of that plaguey ball; I wish that fellow's legs had been in a man-trap, before they had brought him to this house."

Before her lamentation was ended, Mary had left the room, and Mrs. Millar felt convinced that there was nothing to be done, but to prepare for a journey to London instantly.

CHAPTER VII.

MR. GOAD had been too busily occupied about many matters to renew his love-suit in the kitchen, and had just descended again to his office, after washing his face and hands, combing his hair, and putting on a clean cravat, in fact, having, as he considered, dressed for dinner, when Mr. Wilmot presented himself, the clock in the office chiming the half-hour.

"You are rather before your time, are you not?" said Goad, after the usual salutations; "we do not dine until seven."

"I am so," replied Wilmot; "but I have a little matter of business to transact with you before dinner."

"Business!" said Goad. "Delighted to be of service, I assure you;" and he opened a diary lying upon his table, in which he instantly wrote:—Charles Wilmot, Esq.—Consultation. "Nothing like being particular, sir."

"I have a letter," said Wilmot, "for a client of yours, Mr. Grey."

"Mr. Grey!" echoed Goad, with a look of astonishment.

"It is addressed to your care," continued Wilmot, not observing the effect his words had upon

Goad; "and for very particular reasons I am desirous of knowing Mr. Grey."

"And for very particular reasons I am not desirous you should know Mr. Grey," thought Goad, though he bowed, as expressing the pleasure he should feel in introducing them to each other.

"If you will procure me an early interview, I should esteem it an obligation."

"An obligation?" repeated Goad, not knowing what to say.

Wilmot misunderstood his hesitation and added, "to be charged for accordingly."

Goad bowed and smiled, and proceeded with the entry in his diary, saying, "Really I would oblige you if I could, but Mr. Grey is a commercial traveller." (He paused to watch the effect of this assertion.) "However, your letter shall be forwarded to him."

It was evident that Wilmot did not suspect that Ruby and the person he had named were the same (to the great relief of Mr. Goad), for Wilmot requested permission to write a few lines to inclose with Mary's letter, and was shown into the inner office for that purpose.

Goad knew the letter Wilmot had given him was from the unknown correspondent of Ruby, and he thought, "How lucky this note fell into my hands! It is the neat little crowquill character that old Ruby receives with such pleasure. Had he had

this to-day, our pigeon might have escaped plucking, for, after one of these epistles, Ruby is as soft as a woman." He placed Mary's note in his waistcoat pocket.

Joe Martin had not been idle all this time. By the aid of his landlord he had found a legal adviser, and placed Mrs. Barker's will in safe keeping. According to his promise, he had hastened back to Susan, and arranged with that terrified young person to take advantage of Mr. Goad's dinner engagement and leave the house that very evening. The newly-united lovers had had, what Joe called, "a dish of tea and a bout of courting," and Susan's large box stood ready corded to be conveyed up the area steps as soon as the evening closed in. Joe had gone into the street to reconnoitre, when, to his great amazement, he saw Mrs. Millar and Mary pause before the house he had just quitted. Mrs. Millar appeared in a state of more than her usual trepidation, and he could see that the face of his young mistress was pale and full of sorrow.

"This is the house, dear Milly," said Mary, with constrained firmness; "knock, and ask for my father."

"Oh, dear me!" replied Mrs. Millar, the tears streaming down her cheeks; "I daren't, Mary! I daren't! My courage has failed me all the way we came, and if Mr. Grey should open the door, I should faint."

"Then I will," said Mary. "Here is a bell with 'Office' written beneath it; is that the one I should ring?"

Mrs. Millar could only sob out, "Yes! yes!"

"Come, Milly," said Mary, very kindly, "remember I depend upon you for support. I know not what trial is in store for me."

She rang the bell, and the church clock of St. James struck eight. No one came to the door. She rang again. The door was now opened by Trotter, the office boy, wearing, however, a suit of buttons.

"Did you ring?" he asked, rudely.

"Yes."

"Well, it's after office hours; you ought to know that," said Trotter. "What do you want?"

"I wish to see Mr. Grey," replied Mary, the words almost inarticulate from her emotion.

"He don't live here, ma'am," said Trotter; "we know nothing of him. We only take in his letters;" and, the upstairs bell ringing at that moment, the boy shut the door.

Mary turned to Mrs. Millar, who had almost performed the threatened fainting. "What does this mean? Not know him? There is some frightful mystery!" and the poor girl clung to the iron railing for support.

Joe Martin instantly crossed the road, and Mrs. Millar's exclamation of surprise and delight aroused poor Mary. Without waiting to ask a question, nay, without even feeling any surprise at this fortuitous appearance of her servant, she said —

"Joseph, you find me in sad trouble, with no one

to advise, to aid me. I want, nay, must find my father immediately. I have no clue to his London residence but at this place. They deny that he lives here."

"That I believe to be true enough, miss, 'cos Susan Fletcher that I knows lives in the kitchen. Mr. Goad lives in the offices, and the upper rooms belong to a Mr. Ruby."

"Ruby!" Mary almost screamed the word — "Ruby was the name!"

Joe started at the voice of his young mistress, as she continued —

"How do you know this?"

Joe told her how he had acquired his knowledge.

"I must see this Susan Fletcher," said Mary, "instantly! instantly!" and she seized Joe's arm so tightly that he almost cried out.

In a few moments the whole party was in the kitchen, to Susan's great astonishment.

"You live in this house," said Mary; "you know its inmates? There is a Mr. — Mr. Ruby, is there not?"

"Yes, miss," replied Susan, drawing nearer to Joe as her natural protector; "a gay old gentleman as keeps a deal of company, and sits up very late of nights."

"Oh, should that man's tale be true!" cried Mary. "Can you place me anywhere to see Mr. Ruby unobserved?"

Susan was frightened and confused, but Joe spoke out, "Yes, Susan, you can; there's this staircase that goes to the lodger's room, you told me."

Susan was still too frightened to reply until Mary took her hand between her own, and said, "More than my life depends upon my seeing Mr. Ruby this night. Do not refuse to help me, and I will never forget your kindness." Joe Martin then told Susan who her suppliant was, and urged her to comply with the wish of his mistress. So it was arranged that Susan should go upstairs and see how the desired reconnoissance could be effected. Two weary hours passed away, and Mary's dreadful doubts remained unsatisfied, as Trotter was continually busy about the landing.

Let us precede Mary, should she, indeed, be admitted to a knowledge of her father's wickedness.

At one of the card-tables, lighted by a single lamp, whose green shade left the players' faces in shadow, were seated young Wilmot and Wagstaff. The night was yet young, but the play had evidently been some time in operation, and, from the conversation, it seemed that Wilmot had been the winner. Ruby and Goad were, apparently, careless lookers on, although the former made bets of some amount with Wagstaff, and had shared in the good fortune of the young dupe. Goad endeavoured to imitate the *sang-froid* of Ruby, but with indifferent success, and kept continually fumbling in his pockets, taking snuff, and rubbing his fingers through his bushy hair. During these nervous manipulations, Mary's note escaped from his waistcoat-pocket, and, falling

to the ground, remained there some time, until it attracted the attention of Trotter, who was employed in supplying the players with wine.

"Luck's with me this time," said Wagstaff, the game having terminated in his favour.

"I am glad you are a winner at last," remarked Wilmot. "I dislike having all the advantage, I fear the fairness of my play may be suspected."

Such a possibility was scouted by the whole party. A heavy sum was now at stake, and from Ruby's compressed lips, it was evident a change in the play was intended. The game was in progress when Trotter handed, on a salver, Mary's note to Ruby.

"Don't bring me letters now," said Ruby, peevishly; "to-morrow," and he waived the boy away.

"I found it on the carpet, sir," replied Trotter. "It is addressed to Mr. Grey."

Ruby instantly took the letter, and his hitherto calm face flushed and twitched, as he recognised the handwriting of his daughter. He rose and went to a light on the sideboard. "Her letter found in this room!" he thought. He broke the seal hastily, and read as follows —

"MY DEAREST FATHER, —
"The bearer of this letter is Mr. Charles Wilmot"
— (a blow could not have made him recoil more. It was some moments before he could read further.)

"He will explain all. I have met him frequently of late, and his kindness has been so marked, that I knew not until to-day how deeply he had interested me." (Ruby filled a large goblet with claret, and drained it at a draught.) "Now, convinced to what my fault has led, I hasten to ask forgiveness for myself, and your favour for Wilmot!"

He read the letter, word for word again, being almost in a stupor, and was only roused by hearing Wagstaff say —

"Let us give over for to-night. I am winning more than I care to do."

"I can afford my losings — luck may turn again, and if not, no matter!"

He looked to the players, and could see that the stakes were large, and Wilmot greatly excited.

"If it be that she love this man," he thought, "what have I done? Excited in him the lust of play; that fatal passion which soon grows master over all." Again Wagstaff was heard — "I will not play longer. The cards are dead against you."

"Luck's all, my dear fellow," said Wilmot; "if I complain not of losing, surely you need not grumble at winning."

"The deadly poison works," thought Ruby. "To-night his losses are great, or Wagstaff would not fence his play. Then will come the consequence of injury — a desire for retaliation. The downward

"course is easy, and Mary loves him! He must be rescued!" With great effort, Ruby recovered his usual calmness of manner, and joined the players as Wagstaff exclaimed: — "Encore! You see you cannot win; you have already lost a thousand pounds."

"What's that?" replied Wilmot, flushed with the excitement of the play and the wine he had unconsciously drank during the game. "I've twenty more to back them. Come!"

"Perhaps a change of players," said Ruby, calmly, "may equalize the game? I'll take the hand."

Wagstaff insisted upon Ruby's proposal being accepted, and the game proceeded. Wagstaff had already won more than had been intended at this initiatory meeting. Wilmot's whole fortune was the quarry of the gamesters, and they feared to alarm him prematurely; but Wagstaff had so much reliance upon the judgment of Ruby in conducting such disgraceful raids, that he did not hesitate to accept a large bet offered by Wilmot.

Wagstaff, as he sat watching the play, felt his sleeve cautiously pulled by Goad, who then motioned him to the sideboard.

"I've dropped a letter addressed to Mr. Grey somewhere," said Goad.

"Oh — the letter," replied Wagstaff, annoyed at being disturbed for such a cause; "mind the play. Ruby never failed to plant a card when he wanted it."

"I tell you, if the old boy gets that letter now," said Goad, "it will be fatal to us."

"Mine!" exclaimed Wilmot.

"I've lost," said Ruby, coolly.

"That letter's done it," whispered Goad to Wagstaff, who, boiling with rage, cried out —

"Sold! by heavens! You're playing false!"

Wilmot, supposing the words addressed to himself, sprang to his feet, and in a loud tone demanded who dare accuse him of playing false?

"Silence, poor gull!" said Wagstaff, beside himself with passion; "it was not to you I spoke, but to that old knave there!" and he shook his fist in Ruby's face.

In a moment Ruby had his confederate by the throat, and so powerful was his grasp, that Wagstaff shrunk within it.

"Unsay that word! Unsay it, or I'll strangle you!"

Ruby slightly relaxed his hold, and enabled Wagstaff to speak.

"Never, Ruby! You have sold us, like a selfish rogue, for the sake of that girl at Reigate."

"Silence!" cried Ruby, "if you would not die in my hands."

Some word that Wagstaff muttered infuriated Ruby still more, and Wilmot and Goad were on the point of interfering when Ruby loosed his hold, threw his hands up in the air, and staggered from

his foe. One word had wrought the change. Mary had said, "Father!"

"Yes, she had entered the room at last, hearing the noise of the struggle, and the angry voices, to behold the one she sought in Robert Ruby the gambler! Did that stay her? No; in a moment her arms were around his neck, and her wondering face turned up towards his.

"What brought you here, Mary?" he said.

"I came because he told me what — I could not believe," replied Mary.

"He? Wilmot?"

"No; he with whom I saw you struggling," said Mary, her tears falling fast; "and it is true, it is true!"

"What did he tell you, Mary? That I was a gambler?" Ruby's voice was hoarse and low.

"I cannot tell you what he said you were," replied Mary, hiding her face in her hands.

"Ah, you turn from me!" cried Ruby. "You, the child for whom I have lived this life of scorn — for whom I have spent the night in feverish excitement, and the day in wearying thought — you now despise me! But it is just! — it is just!" He staggered to a chair. Mary tried to go to him, but could not.

"Do not leave me, Mary," he said, after a moment's pause: "do not leave your father desolate — despised. Think! think how I must love you, when upon my knees I pray you not to leave me!"

He had risen, and was about to kneel at her feet, when Mary pressed him to her bosom, and said —

“Leave you! Kneel to me! No! here is your place, dear father!”

Although Ruby and Mary remained silently locked in each other's arms for some moments, neither of the other three men spoke a word. Even Wagstaff was moved by what he saw, and reproached himself for his vindictiveness.

Mary was the first to speak.

“Now, father,” she said, “let us quit this hateful place. Let us go home.”

“Home!” exclaimed Ruby. “Ah, that peaceful dream has gone for ever!”

“Not so!” said Mary. “Knowing what the past has been, my love shall be more active in the future, we will never part again.”

“No, no!” cried Ruby, covering his face. “My cunning plans are blown into the air; I can never look in your dear face again as I have done, Mary.”

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AND

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BY

R. B. MARK LEMON ORS

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VOL. II.

LEIPZIG

BEHNHARDT TAUCHNITZ

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to the ground, remained there some time, until it attracted the attention of Trotter, who was employed in supplying the players with wine.

"Luck's with me this time," said Wagstaff, the game having terminated in his favour.

"I am glad you are a winner at last," remarked Wilmot. "I dislike having all the advantage, I fear the fairness of my play may be suspected."

Such a possibility was scouted by the whole party. A heavy sum was now at stake, and from Ruby's compressed lips, it was evident a change in the play was intended. The game was in progress when Trotter handed, on a salver, Mary's note to Ruby.

"Don't bring me letters now," said Ruby, peevishly; "to-morrow," and he waived the boy away.

"I found it on the carpet, sir," replied Trotter. "It is addressed to Mr. Grey."

Ruby instantly took the letter, and his hitherto calm face flushed and twitched, as he recognised the handwriting of his daughter. He rose and went to a light on the sideboard. "Her letter found in this room!" he thought. He broke the seal hastily, and read as follows —

"MY DEAREST FATHER, —
"The bearer of this letter is Mr. Charles Wilmot" — (a blow could not have made him recoil more. It was some moments before he could read further.)

"He will explain all. I have met him frequently of late, and his kindness has been so marked, that I knew not until to-day how deeply he had interested me." (Ruby filled a large goblet with claret, and drained it at a draught.) "Now, convinced to what my fault has led, I hasten to ask forgiveness for myself, and your favour for Wilmot."

He read the letter, word for word again, being almost in a stupor, and was only roused by hearing Wagstaff say —

"Let us give over for to-night. I am winning more than I care to do."

"I can afford my losings — luck may turn again, and if not, no matter!"

He looked to the players, and could see that the stakes were large, and Wilmot greatly excited.

"If it be that she love this man," he thought, "what have I done? Excited in him the lust of play; that fatal passion which soon grows master over all." Again Wagstaff was heard — "I will not play longer. The cards are dead against you."

"Luck's all, my dear fellow," said Wilmot; "if I complain not of losing, surely you need not grumble at winning."

"The deadly poison works," thought Ruby. "To-night his losses are great, or Wagstaff would not fence his play. Then will come the consequence of injury — a desire for retaliation. The downward

course is easy, and Mary loves him! He must be rescued!" With great effort, Ruby recovered his usual calmness of manner, and joined the players as Wagstaff exclaimed: — "Encore! You see you cannot win; you have already lost a thousand pounds."

"What's that?" replied Wilmot, flushed with the excitement of the play and the wine he had unconsciously drank during the game. "I've twenty more to back them. Come!"

"Perhaps a change of players," said Ruby, calmly, "may equalize the game? I'll take the hand."

Wagstaff insisted upon Ruby's proposal being accepted, and the game proceeded. Wagstaff had already won more than had been intended at this initiatory meeting. Wilmot's whole fortune was the quarry of the gamesters, and they feared to alarm him prematurely; but Wagstaff had so much reliance upon the judgment of Ruby in conducting such disgraceful raids, that he did not hesitate to accept a large bet offered by Wilmot.

Wagstaff, as he sat watching the play, felt his sleeve cautiously pulled by Goad, who then motioned him to the sideboard.

"I've dropped a letter addressed to Mr. Grey somewhere," said Goad.

"Oh — the letter," replied Wagstaff, annoyed at being disturbed for such a cause; "mind the play. Ruby never failed to plant a card when he wanted it."

"I tell you, if the old boy gets that letter now," said Goad, "it will be fatal to us."

"Mine!" exclaimed Wilmot.

"I've lost," said Ruby, coolly.

"That letter's done it," whispered Goad to Wagstaff, who, boiling with rage, cried out —

"Sold! by heavens! You're playing false!"

Wilmot, supposing the words addressed to himself, sprang to his feet, and in a loud tone demanded who dare accuse him of playing false?

"Silence, poor gull!" said Wagstaff, beside himself with passion; "it was not to you I spoke, but to that old knave there!" and he shook his fist in Ruby's face.

In a moment Ruby had his confederate by the throat, and so powerful was his grasp, that Wagstaff shrunk within it.

"Unsay that word! Unsay it, or I'll strangle you!"

Ruby slightly relaxed his hold, and enabled Wagstaff to speak.

"Never, Ruby! You have sold us, like a selfish rogue, for the sake of that girl at Reigate."

"Silence!" cried Ruby, "if you would not die in my hands."

Some word that Wagstaff muttered infuriated Ruby still more, and Wilmot and Goad were on the point of interfering when Ruby loosed his hold, threw his hands up in the air, and staggered from

his foe. One word had wrought the change. Mary had said, "Father!"

"Yes, she had entered the room at last, hearing the noise of the struggle, and the angry voices, to behold the one she sought in Robert Ruby the gambler! Did that stay her? No; in a moment her arms were around his neck, and her wondering face turned up towards his.

"What brought you here, Mary?" he said.

"I came because he told me what — I could not believe," replied Mary.

"He? Wilmot?"

"No; he with whom I saw you struggling," said Mary, her tears falling fast; "and it is true, it is true!"

"What did he tell you, Mary? That I was a gambler?" Ruby's voice was hoarse and low.

"I cannot tell you what he said you were," replied Mary, hiding her face in her hands.

"Ah, you turn from me!" cried Ruby. "You, the child for whom I have lived this life of scorn — for whom I have spent the night in feverish excitement, and the day in wearying thought — you now despise me! But it is just! — it is just!" He staggered to a chair. Mary tried to go to him, but could not.

"Do not leave me, Mary," he said, after a moment's pause: "do not leave your father desolate — despised. Think! think how I must love you, when upon my knees I pray you not to leave me!"

He had risen, and was about to kneel at her feet, when Mary pressed him to her bosom, and said —

“Leave you! Kneel to me! No! here is your place, dear father!”

Although Ruby and Mary remained silently locked in each other's arms for some moments, neither of the other three men spoke a word. Even Wagstaff was moved by what he saw, and reproached himself for his vindictiveness.

Mary was the first to speak.

“Now, father,” she said, “let us quit this hateful place. Let us go home.”

“Home!” exclaimed Ruby. “Ah, that peaceful dream has gone for ever!”

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